The CONSTANT SIMP

by

NELL MARTIN

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The
CONSTANT
SIMP

MEET THE AUTHOR

Miss Nell Martin was born in Illinois and she describes subsequent events thus:

"I was a strawberry picker in Missouri when I was ten.

"I went to school in Colorado Springs and Denver.

"I've been

soldier, sailor, oh what a plight I am,
tinker, tailor, oh what a sight I am.

"I've been a newspaper woman in Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles; actress (dramatic leading lady, musical comedy soubrette, vaudeville singer); book store clerk; press agent; movie actress; telephone girl; taxi driver; cabaret entertainer; stenographer; law student; proof reader. I can even run a laundry mangle."

It was Miss Martin's interest in the law that give her the background for this most amusing story of Maisie St. Clair whom you will recognize in the following pages as THE CONSTANT SIMP.

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BY

NELL MARTIN

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THE CONSTANT SIMP

I

NUNC PRO TUNC

"PLEASE, Miss Snclair," said Maisie's employer in a dour tone. Snclair was George's sad attempt to ignore the screaming theatricality of a name which he was quite sure was not her own—Maisie St. Clair. George Dorsey—Maisie's boss—hated the gilt sound of it.

"Miss Snclair—I implore you! Man, Person, Gentleman, Client—anything, I beg of you, but not *Bird!* I dislike to have to keep calling your attention to——"

"Don't apologize!" Maisie broke in. "'Twas a slip."

George sighed. He looked grieved. He was grieved. And for a moment Maisie was downcast. Had he at last touched her pride?

"Whyn't you call me Maisie?" she asked, brightly. "You seem to suffer so much over my name. I can't help it because my father was a tightrope walker, or that his name was St. Clair. But Maisie might be

better for you. I don't mind. Go on; it's easy to remember."

Ye Gods! Easy to remember! George's hatred of it was because it was so hard to forget!

"I didn't mean to say bird," she continued as George turned away. "But I was going to say that when that bir—fellow comes in I could tell him you was in conf'rence. That sounds swell. That's what the girl over to O'Melveny's and Greenburg's says, and from the breath on O'Melveny when I met 'im in the hall the conf'rence is kept in the bottom of the filing cabinets."

Groaning, George turned into the tiny cubicle which was his private office; in reality it was but a part of the larger room inclosed in shabby panels and frosted glass.

He hated these daily brawls, for that was the plane to which his contact with his stenographer had descended. Stenographer is a word misused: Maisie was a mere adjunct to an office. Incompetent, rollicking, wholly innocent of either shorthand or typing—even office routine was a thing outside her consciousness—George begrudged her every cent of the pittance which he doled out to her on Saturdays, a sum so small that no other could have struggled along on it, but Maisie seemed to thrive. And George knew she wasn't even worth it.

Anyway, George had a case now and with its attendant fee, he reflected, he would be able to fire Maisie and hire a paragon, smooth of coiffure as

Maisie was not; modestly tailored as Maisie flamboyantly was not; soft of voice and businesslike, as Maisie emphatically was not; a marvel behind an efficient pencil; one who could realize that "Mr. Dorsey" and "Sir" were more to be desired as a form of address toward one's employer than "Say!" or "Listen!"

There was nothing stupid about George but he was not one of those chaps who leaned toward the law or wooed her by toil, or won her with honors. The leaning had been his mother's,—together with most of the wooing—and the winning was by the skin of his teeth. And most of George's cases were trivial; little suits for damages to a flivver; against the cleaner who ruined a twenty dollar rug; and the suitcase lost by the transfer company. However "from small beginnings—" and there were plenty of them. George had been retained in one divorce case.

This case which was taking George out of town, now, however, would make many things possible by way of celebration, and the first and foremost would be to fire Maisie! It was a nice dream, but one that Maisie would not have cared for.

Really the joke was on George. Maisie knew when he was merely reading from the form books verbatim, not composing resonant sentences when he dictated, but that mattered not. Despite her frizzed bobbed hair, despite the green-set combs which tried to hold it in place, despite the short, scalloped, taffeta frock with almost no sleeves, despite the near-silk stockings

and the thick lip rouge, Maisie knew what perhaps George himself did not know, that he was none too keen but was conscientious; and she felt that "as long as nobody sprung anything technical on him he could wiggle through."

Her knowledge did not keep Maisie from near-idolatry. Whether it was the fact that George's door proclaimed that he was a lawyer—and Maisie desired passionately to be identified with something dignified, preferably the law or the prophets—the fact remained that Maisie adored George. Hence her dream.

First, aware in some dim degree that she was a dumb-bell, Maisie was studying three nights a week, studying shorthand to make a part of her dream come true; for she dreamed of being a perfect help to George, paving the way toward asking for a "raise." In fact she was so sure that her work was improving that when George came home from this trip she intended to mention it to him. The rest of the dream was less likely to come true. She had visions of getting business for George, a dim dream of acquiring a wealthy friend badly in need of a lawsuit, that she might shove George into the breach. Her one fear was that someone else might find out what she knew, that George had had but one superior court case—that a divorce. And that had been before Maisie came to work for him.

Now that he was away on his "big case"—accidentally she had heard George mention the amount

of his fee—she wished she might find that mythical lawsuit during his absence so that her request for a larger salary might meet favor.

Then Mrs. Arkovitch came in to see Mr. Dorsey. "Out of town!" she cried in amazement. "But how should he be? He is my attorney. That he should go so! It pains me!"

"Was it a case?" asked Maisie, who had not known that George had any such client.

"It was such a case that breaks the heart. It was my divorce."

"Mr. Dorsey will be back in a few days," replied Maisie. "It really doesn't make any difference, a few days, lady; it takes so blooming long to get 'em anyway. Horrible messes, divorces! Mr. Dorsey doesn't really like to take 'em but for a few special clients he will do it. He'll handle yours, alright, if I ask 'im."

"Handle mine! I should say he will! He already did. I got it a year ago you understand. You see I had me a lawyer by name McClusky upstairs, y' understand, and when it come time for my divorce case to come up in court he had left town and nobody not even his wife knew where he had gone or anything, y' understand, and I was wondering in the hall whatever should I do, y' understand, and along comes this Mr. Dorsey and I told it to him and he says he had lots of cases just like that and would get my divorce for me for twenty dollars and I had already paid that McClusky, y' understand.

"But I had to get the divorce and I did not want to wait any longer and it was near time to be at the courthouse that minute, y' understand, so I told him I had ten dollars with me and he should take a check for the rest, and we went to the courthouse, and the divorce he got it and then it was only an interlocka-try degree, y' understand, and I was to come back in a year for a final degree, y' understand, and the year is now and he is out of town! Oi! oi! All my lawyers leave town! I should pay some other lawyer twenty dollars to get me a final degree. And I can't wait any longer as I have a nice young man who owns a nice tailoring business with living privileges in the rear, and me breaking my back over a power machine which ain't what it's cracked up to be and me being a good cook and liking the smell of steam from the presser and all that, y' understand, and he being kind of cranky about me having got a divorce anyway, and he wants we should get married tomorrow and I ain't got the heart to explain about that final degree."

Out of breath at last, she paused, then drew in a deep draft for a second effort at explanation, but Maisie nipped her at the outset.

She could readily see that a final decree was necessary to the wedding with the nice tailoring business, and it looked as if someone would have to get it. Who was to do it but herself? She, Maisie St. Clair.

"You come back in the morning and I'll have that final decree ready for you," she promised wildly.

"Run along now and just leave it to me. I'll do the dirty work." She shoved her caller toward the door, but there was more to come.

"And I got it a friend with a skinflint husband who wants she should go without even a summer hat and he worth forty thousand dollars, the old miser, and she wants a divorce; only you should make her husband pay her good alimony and I would bring her in to see you. And the more you stick her old man for the better she would like it."

"Bring her in tomorrow morning," said Maisie. "I'll get her divorce myself if Mr. Dorsey doesn't get back in a day or two. And I'll paste plenty of alimony plaster on the old crab's back. Now beat it while I get to work."

The new case for George! But that final decree had to be obtained. Seizing her purple tam from its nail Maisie sped toward the courthouse and there stopped at a booth presided over by a kind old gentleman; a sign marked "Information" hung above the little window. Information was just what Maisie needed, and lots of it. With an amused smile the purveyor of Maisie's needs listened to her query, "Where do they get divorces? I mean old ones, not new ones," and after a little further questioning, he directed her to the office of the County Clerk. To an amazed deputy she repeated her abrupt demand.

"Divorces?" the rubicund deputy laughed. "You want a lawyer."

"Not on your life," returned Maisie with asperity. "I'm workin' for one."

Then she explained nearly as volubly as Mrs. Arkovitch, leaving out the part about the new case, but little else. Relayed from one department to another, Maisie at last came to the great racks of books in which are kept the entries concerning the sundering of marriage ties, MacDonald, the amiable deputy, assisting her. The name and the approximate date were all of Maisie's available information. And then came the blow.

There was no record in the entry book of any divorce granted to Mrs. Arkovitch. The would-be bridegroom with the nice tailoring business, kind of cranky about this divorce thing anyway; the power machine that wasn't what it was cracked up to be; the new case without a summer hat; the raise she wanted to ask for—all these swirled around in Maisie's hitherto empty head. It was all off. There was no hope. Mrs. Arkovitch had no divorce, not even for twenty extra dollars.

"But she did! George did have one divorce case, true as true!"

"Who's George?" asked MacDonald.

"George Dorsey, Attorney-at-Law, and he is a darn good lawyer and he got this divorce, so where is it?"

"I'll guess with you—" grinned the deputy county clerk.

Maisie had eaten all the lip rouge off by now, and

tears threatened. This was a matter of life and death, or more properly speaking, of matrimony and maintenance—the latter Maisie's.

"All right, kid," said the deputy; "I'll see what I can find on it. Arkovitch is the name, isn't it? Last—November?"

After long search among musty tomes, filing cabinets and card index boxes, MacDonald reported that there had, indeed, been a divorce granted to one Mrs. Albina Arkovitch; there were court records that the bond had been officially severed; but Maisie's boss, having heard the fateful words spoken, had evidently considered his duty done and had failed in the completion of the affair. A decree form should have been filled out, signed by the Judge, and then presented for filing and entry. This had not been done. What kind of a lawyer was this aforesaid boss?

"Well, if it says there that the judge granted it, couldn't we just write it in the book now and wouldn't that square it all up?" she inquired.

MacDonald shook his head, but smiled. This was a distinctly new type of legal office assistant and he was enjoying her.

"But isn't there some way we can fix it? The lady wants to get married and I just *have* to have that decree."

"I'm sure I don't know any way to fix it. You see, Sis," MacDonald motioned to one of the seats alongside the racks which held the entry volumes, "it isn't a question of the divorce being granted. It's like

there was a catch in it, this way, see? the law does not say you can get a final decree one year from the day the interlocutory is granted. If it did, that would square it, as you say. But what the law says is this: *One year from the date that the interlocutory is filed and entered.*

"That's the rub. I surely would like to help you out, but I don't see what can be done except to get an interlocutory signed and filed now, and then it will be a year before you can get the final."

A year! And the nice tailoring business was cranky!

"Which judge was it granted it?" Maisie asked then.

MacDonald consulted the file again. "Thinking of asking him about it?" he asked. "Because if you are, the one to see is Marbrough, the presiding judge. He signs the finals."

"Thanks most to death," she grinned. Nothing could have taken her grin permanently. And to the presiding judge's quarters she sought the way.

It was a queer little figure that Judge Marbrough saw from over his high desk. Around the wall, on padded seats, were duly respectful attorneys waiting their turn to bring some matter to his attention; beyond the railing sat a group of legal talent waiting for a private word with the Judge as he left the bench. Straight to the desk walked Maisie, on the principle that fools walk in.

"Yes, young lady?" The judge smiled. No one

remembered having seen him smile in a court room before.

"Please I want to get a final decree of divorce and there isn't any interlocutory," she said bravely. "You see, they forgot to put it in the book. Could you give it to me?"

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the judge, and then Maisie leaned both arms on the desk and got confidential, to the stifled mirth of the spectators.

The judge listened gravely. "I'm sorry, but it cannot be done," he said at last, having listened to her suggestions for dating the first decree and putting it in the book now just as if it had been there all the time. It was an ingenious suggestion, he recognized, but not quite according to Law.

"Such a proceeding would not lie, in a divorce action," he added ponderously. "There are certain matters in which a *nunc pro tunc* action order might be issued but not in a divorce decree action. No."

Back to the County Clerk's office sped Maisie. "What's a *nunc per tunc?*" she demanded of MacDonald, bringing a howl of mirth from him.

"Thinking of getting one in your divorce case?" he asked.

"I was," explained Maisie, with dignity. "Whadda you wanta bet I get one, whatever it is?"

Then MacDonald took pains to explain that a *nunc pro tunc* was an order sometimes issued in the matter of lost records, or destroyed documents; if one document necessary to a clear title of land had

been destroyed or lost *after* it had been recorded; or if any original judgment in court action, had been granted and entered according to due process, and then the order became lost from the files; then, and in similar cases, a *nunc pro tunc* order, to restore such lost record, would be given.

Thus MacDonald propounded. He even accompanied his avid listener to the law library and read impressively from the books.

> "*Nunc Pro Tunc:*—Latin for now for then—a phrase used to express that a thing is done at one time which ought to have been performed at another period.
>
> A *nunc pro tunc* entry is an entry made now, of something which was actually previously done, to have effect as of the former date.
> A decree *nunc pro tunc* presupposes a decree allowed or ordered, but not entered through inadvertence of the court."

"Well, that hits the bull's eye!" Maisie grinned. "Why not?"

"The hitch is this," MacDonald persisted patiently. "That would not apply to a divorce decree which had not been entered. The very fact of its not having been entered is what makes your decree nonexistent. Had it been entered you see, then a duplicate could have been made under a *nunc pro tunc.* But it never was filed or entered."

Maisie, the dumb-bell, began to see things. Process of law had begun to unfold. Papers made out in the office stopped being mere things George took away with him; they had to be filed, and here was where one filed them so that next year other people could see what had been done about it. Judges stopped being figures you spoke about meanly because they decided against you, and became personages who heard cases, explained law, listened to your troubles. Very well; Maisie was going to find one who would listen to hers.

MacDonald, who was a regular feller, according to his listener, said it could not be done. Judge Marbrough said it could not be done. It just could not. That was that. The end of it. All right. As one parting favor Maisie asked what judge had granted that decree originally and how to make out an interlocutory blank, just in case she could use it.

With the form filled out and gripped in a trembling hand she sought the "divorce mill" which occupied three courtrooms, one of which was just across the hall from the office where they granted marriage licenses. Making brazen eyes at the clerk of the court, a sallow youth in glasses, she got herself admitted to the judge's chambers. On the threshold, fear seized her. Who was she to come up here and put an impossible request to a crabby old man who would probably bite her, if reports were true? She would have fled, letting the nice tailoring business wait, but the judge had seen her.

"What is it?" he asked, in a tired, unfriendly voice.

Maisie was frightened now. She regretted her rashness. Someone had told her that Judge Thompson was an old bear. He wasn't, exactly, but he growled a lot like one, and had been known to bite. Lawyers feared him, particularly young lawyers. As far as that goes, no old and experienced purveyors of justice had ever been noted for trying to draw his attention in line of battle.

"If you have some business, please state it," the judge added, as the marble statue within his door made no sound.

Then it was vouchsafed to Maisie to know that Judge Thompson was not trying to frighten her; merely that he was an old man, a weary and worn old man trying to keep the world from finding out that he was worn and old; but relentlessly pursued by feckless dolts with such missions as hers. She was sorry for him, not herself.

"Oh, Judge, I'm in such trouble!" she said, going swiftly to his table and pulling a chair confidently close to it. "And nobody in the world seems to want to help me out of it. And I know you will." For the third time that afternoon Maisie told her story.

As she went through the steps of her discouragement, lines of shrewdness drew themselves around the judge's eyes. At last her breathless: "And you're my last hope!" brought from him shortly——

"Who sent you to me?"

"Nobody. I just thought as you granted the divorce that you ought to be the one to make it right."

"H'm—" murmured the judge. "You're sure, are you, that no county-clerk deputy mentioned that I might fall for the scheme?"

"Oh, no!" Maisie assured him. "I'll say he didn't. He said I was crazy to ask you. But I was crazy anyway, with it all, and I figured it wouldn't knock me any flatter if you did bawl me out."

Something like a grin twitched at the corners of the judge's mouth.

"What do you intend to be when you grow up?" he demanded of the diminutive figure before him.

"Oh, I guess I mean to go on working for Geo—Mr. Dorsey," replied Maisie, vaguely. "If I learn a lot, about stenography, and law, and all that, maybe I can help him more. If you're talking turkey he needs someone to look after him bad. He's pretty young for a lawyer."

"Why don't you study to be a lawyer yourself?" asked the judge, for no other reason than that this youngster was so serious, and so funny!

"Oh, I never could learn enough," she assured him. "I'm really not smart enough for that."

"H'm—" grunted the judge again. "A lot of these young cubs are practicing without knowing that. Like some piano players, they practice by ear instead of by noodle." He reflected a moment.

"Got that interlocutory made out?" he asked suddenly. He studied the form and then laboriously

printed the words "As of date of November 14, 1924. *Nunc pro tunc*.," over his signature.

"There," he said. "And if your boss forgets any more simple matters of form in the practice of law, send him to me. I'll make a few remarks that will prop his eyes open. Run along, child! And come back to see me sometime. I hope you decide to be a lawyer. Take that down to the entry clerk; tell him to enter it and make out your final."

"Oh thank you, Judge Thompson," said Maisie, ladylike and quiet for once. "You're a regular old peach. I'll do as much for you sometime. Thanks don't buy you anything, but I'll vote for you from now on."

"Don't thank me!" The judge grinned. "You're not out of the woods yet. You know, as a matter of fact, when you get that final decree made out, you still have to take it to Judge Marbrough to get it signed."

"Holy smoke!" Maisie ejaculated, round-eyed. Judge Marbrough, who had said that such a proceeding would not be legal. "Do I have to take it myself?"

"You do," said the judge, quietly. "I've done all I can do."

"You have!" she assented quickly. "You're a pip and I won't forget it but—that old frozen face! You might know there was a catch in it somewhere. Oh well, maybe I'll think up some way to get it over."

"I'll wager you do," the judge returned encourag-

ingly. "You've gone this far and done one impossible thing. Keep a stiff upper lip."

"Thanks a heap," Maisie smiled back. "Whoever said you was a crab was crazy!" And she was gone, leaving a thoroughly astounded limb of the law behind her.

The near-apoplexy of Judge Thompson at his visitor's parting remark flung over a shapely shoulder was as nothing to that of Deputy MacDonald when Maisie triumphantly waved her duly signed, sealed and delivered *nunc pro tunc* divorce decree under his nose, which she did most riotously.

"If you want any important business done for your office, try sending a go-getter after it!" she proclaimed joyously.

MacDonald, after a moment of semi-paralysis, again called round him his brother deputies. One and all they agreed that Maisie "must have held a gun on him to get Thompson to sign it."

"You should worry how I got it, I got it, didn't I?" she demanded. "Now you boys hustle around and write it in that stuffy old book and give me that final decree and we'll get going from here."

In vain did the entry clerk protest that she would have to leave the unusual document to be entered in its turn of office routine, and return the following day for her decree.

"Leave that out of my lily-white hands?" she jeered. "When that's the first one there ever was and there won't ever be another one? I'm going to frame

it! And the judge says that *nunc* stuff means *now* and where I come from now don't mean tomorrow! Nossir! I'll stand right here and watch this operation and get a wiggle on. I got to get another coroner to give a verdick on that funny paper this afternoon yet, and the clock says time is slippin'. We'll get this off our hands in five minutes if you'll write it instead of arguin' with me why you can't."

It was difficult to persuade her that she could not retain possession of her precious *nunc pro tunc* decree, but the importance of that faded when the despairing entry clerk laid aside his other work, marched over and did the entry like a man, and instructed MacDonald to fill out and present the young lady with a final decree of divorce for Albina Arkovitch, final form, ready for the presiding judge's signature.

"By golly!" MacDonald said admiringly. "If you don't own the world in three years I'll personally eat filing cabinet number seven, there, the iron one. I bet if you wanted to get a permit to open a saloon you'd get it, with the courthouse steps as your location."

"Go awn, yer kiddin' me," said Maisie haughtily, but her eyes twinkled in comradeship. And she waited patiently for her prey.

Then she went back to what she felt was her doom—the office of the presiding judge at the end of a long dark courtroom.

She considered that a respite from sentence had

been granted when she saw that the judge's high-backed chair was empty. Several attorneys stood near the bench, waiting for him to emerge from chambers. Maisie slunk up to a comfortable distance from two who leaned upon the railing talking in whispers. She felt that if the judge came out she might hide behind the fat one. It never occurred to her to give up, even though she knew she would fail.

Then luck gave her a boost. A tall, spare, stern man with extra heavy lenses in his spectacles leaned over the desk, laying in exact order a sheaf of documents.

"Looks like business was rushing," she heard a fellow-attorney say in a low tone. "Going to keep him long? Because I just wanted to see him about three minutes."

"Won't be a minute," responded the near-sighted man. "Just want his signature on a bunch of orders. Order to show cause, couple of supplementary proceedings and a final decree."

He bent once again to peer at his orderly sheaf of papers, then turned to converse with his confreré. The idea hit Maisie broadside. She slipped within the railing, unrolled her precious final decree and slid it under the near-sighted attorney's stack of papers. Her tongue was all ready with a plea that he get it signed for her as she had to go to attend to some more important deed, had he turned. That this proceeding in itself would have drawn the fire of the enemy, or at least its investigation, she did not dream.

Couldn't a brother attorney do a person a little favor like that? Luck, however, was still on the job. The attorney did not catch her at it. Then praying for clear weather, Maisie backed outside the rail and sat down. If this didn't work she would come back and try some other dodge. And then the law in all its majesty stalked forth and took its place on the throne. Maisie was sure Judge Marbrough was twice as large and three times as mean as any other man in the room. He frowned on the hum of conversation and it died.

The judge drew toward him the sheaf of papers, talked a moment in an undertone with their near-sighted author, dipped his pen in the inkwell and wrote again, and again, and again, as the other man still talked. He completed the set of signatures and pushed them over, talking to the next man by then. The methodical one took his papers, slipped them into his brief-case, took his hat and stole out. There was a small, highly colored shadow at his heels.

Not within the dangerous confines of that building did Maisie venture forth for the last fray; but at the corner of the street she touched his arm.

"'Xcuse me, sir," she said in a small voice. "But wasn't you in Judge Marbrough's courtroom just now?"

"Yes," the tall man peered down at the shrieking tam-o'-shanter with a highly colored young female under it.

"Well, if you please, I think when you lifted up

your papers from his desk you got a final decree he had signed for my boss, Mr. Dorsey, George Dorsey the attorney, you know," she went on engagingly. Advertising never hurt anybody.

"I did? Why, I don't think so."

"Oh, yes, sir. It was right on the desk all signed and I was waiting to ask if I might take it away and when you left it was gone, sir," she lied gaily. What matter one small lie after all this?

"I'll go back and look—" he answered turning.

"Oh, never mind going back," she cried hastily. "I'm going right down this way anyway. I'll hold the case while you look in your papers." Suiting the action to the word she grasped the case and held it invitingly. The near-sighted one bent over and peered.

"On the very bottom of the stack," she prompted.

Of course the final decree for Albina Arkovitch was there. The attorney relinquished it apologetically, after noting that it was signed and seemed to be in order. "Sorry to have made such a mistake—" he said.

"Oh, that's all right. Accidents will happen," gushed Maisie, and sped away before he could ask any further questions.

Around the block she went because she had said she was going that way, and then darted back to the now perpetually astounded MacDonald.

"What do I do with it now? Give it to Mrs. Arkovitch?" she asked breathlessly.

"You have to get Marbrough's signature. I thought I'd told you," he began. And that, he was sure, was practically impossible.

"Oh, that's all over. What next?" she demanded.

"File it—and you're through," MacDonald answered weakly, looking at the flourishing capitals used by the presiding judge. Surely, either he was crazy or this snip of a girl was. No one in her right mind would attempt the things she had done to courts of law that day!

"Courts of law where justice is dispensed with—" he murmured as he stamped FILED on the document and filled in the hour and the minute with a pen. "Kid, don't you ever start to run for President. You'd make it—and what a woild this would be!"

"Thanks, old dear," she grinned sweetly. "Gimme a slip saying the decree is filed and is good, so the lady can get married on it."

Still under the spell, MacDonald wrote as directed.

"By tomorrow she can get a certified copy," he said.

"By tomorrow she'll have a marriage license and be in trouble again!" she retorted.

Now let George come home.

George came home, that afternoon, was met at the station by his client and reported his success (by which token luck must have been in two places at the same time) and reached his office with three hundred dollars in his pocket and the intention to fire Maisie. Not even notice would he give her, he

decided, when he found the office closed and locked. Parading around just because he was out of town!

He ran through his scant mail, and picked up a notation—"Mrs. Arkovitch—Mrs. Bimberg." Arkovitch! That was the woman he had represented in a divorce case for twenty dollars. From his present height of three hundred, he blushed for shame. What did she want now? And who was Mrs. Bimberg?

Coming back to an unexpectedly open door, Maisie burst in full of importance and told him who Mrs. Bimberg was. A new divorce case. And Mrs. Arkovitch who was going to marry a tailor shop tomorrow had brought her. But it was a darn close shave. Good thing Maisie had studied up and knew how to get final decrees.

"And when that bird in the county clerk's office told me you hadn't filed no interlocutory degree, I got sore." This had been worrying Maisie, how to tell George without letting him know she knew he had let it get by him—"And oh boy, I guess I laid him out for letting it get lost and then trying to blame it onto you! Ain't it awful how some of these inefficient birds keep their jobs?"

The stricken look in George's eye accounted for the fact that he had let her get by with "bird" twice!

"So believe me, I just went after another one and got it fixed up."

"Fixed up!" George batted his eyes. "How?"

"Oh, I went and saw Judge Thompson about it and he made me a nice little *nunc pro tunc* order and

I had it filed and entered and got me a final—an' went and had conversation with Judge Marbrough——"

Ruined! Done for! The laughing stock of the court house! The end of his hopes!

"Miss Snclair—" said George, choking. "I hope, I sincerely hope—that you did not have the poor judgment to go and discuss this matter of—, er—this oversight with—with those judges!"

"Discuss it?" valiantly. "I'll say I discussed it, and by now we're all old chums. 'Come in any time—' Judge Thompson says—'when you're passing.' *Nunc pro tunc*—just like that! And the final's filed."

"My land—" moaned George. "Did you tell 'em you were from my office?"

"Mentioned it in passing—" she remarked. "They'd like to meet you. And they was glad to do me the favor."

"Favor!" George Dorsey, attorney-at-law, broke his wall of repression. "Favor! At the expense of my legal reputation! Miss Snclair, this has got to stop. Any lawyer would have had brains enough to know that it could not be done—but then—" bitterly "any lawyer would have had sense enough to fire you long ago."

"Fire me?" Maisie repeated unbelievingly. "Why? I got it all fixed up and a certified copy's ready tomorrow. And I got you a new case, and everything." She stood in hurt astonishment.

"Why that decree won't go through and I'll have

to go to all those people and explain that you went without my knowledge and explain to the—er—client that you took too much authority in promising that decree—and that—er—er——"

"Fire me!" Maisie hadn't heard him. "And I thought I could get a raise now!"

"A raise?" The incongruity of it struck George dumbfounded. How could he explain to her the enormity of what she had done?

Then the outer door opened and a round face intruded, with a pair of twinkling eyes.

"Hello, Nunc."

It was the merry little deputy, MacDonald.

"That certified decree was made out, and I thought anybody who put over what you did deserved to get it cleared off the slate in one day. If you'll give me six bits——"

"Six bits?" Maisie repeated, stunned. She had wanted a raise——

"You Mr. Dorsey?" MacDonald asked as George automatically reached into his pocket. "I want to tell you that you've got the smartest steno in the County. Why, man, the deal she put over today will go down in the history of our office as unbeatable. Say, if half the lawyers in this town had that girl's brains they'd quit practicing law and run the country. She's there, Mr. Dorsey, isn't she?"

Suddenly embarrassed, Maisie hung her head and wiggled. Then she turned toward her desk.

George looked from MacDonald to Maisie, and

then to the certified copy of a final decree for Albina Arkovitch. Maisie had said there was a new divorce case coming in. *Nunc Pro Tunc!* Maisie forever in the outer office. Bird! Say, listen! A raise!

"Miss Snclair—" George mumbled, "I guess we can manage that raise—if you want—want to——"

"I'll say I do!" Maisie warbled. "Say, ain't that swell!"

"Going my way?" MacDonald broke an awkward silence.

"Sure. Well, g'night." And George heard the door slam.

"Ain't that the oyster's whiskers? I gotta raise!" she laughed out in the hall. "Generous—that's the kind of a bird my boss is."

II

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

THINGS became "kinda dull in the law business" right after that; it seemed that one thing well done meant nothing left to do. And George was "kinda cranky" about reading books in office time. Also, just about now, Maisie felt that it would be diplomatic to make George believe that she respected his wishes and prejudices; for that near-firing had gotten under her skin. Even though she had maneuvered a raise instead of the threatened firing, she still felt that all was far from secure; one false move and all would be over. No telling when George might break out again.

Casually she scanned the Help Wanted now, with an eye to another egg for her basket. George could not call reading the Want Ads reading for amusement, surely. Help Wanted displaying nothing brilliant, she turned this morning to "Personals." She always read those on the principle that if anyone ever advertised for you, you could the better keep out of their way. From that the fundamentals of her birth and education may be gathered!

However this morning the Personals brought no hint of future danger, and the page was about to be

thrown away when the eagle eye of Maisie was caught by another column hitherto unnoticed—"Attorneys at Law." Under that heading a dozen or so less ethical and no doubt more struggling souls stepped out and told the world that they would gladly pry into its affairs for a remuneration.

Professional ethics was a thing that had never entered Maisie's ken. The fact that a profession is not in the same class as a bargain sale had never occurred to her. What *did* occur to her was that George had been overlooking an opportunity. How was he to add to his clientele of six persons unless people knew he was a lawyer, and how were they to know unless he told them? Her first thought was to remind him of the oversight, thereby establishing herself in his good graces—which she fondly believed she had occupied before she mixed into this divorce decree matter. But a second, and much more delightful thought followed the first. Why remind George of the advertising if he had not thought of it? Why not do this advertising herself on his behalf, and then when a stream of clients poured into the office and George was highly gratified, then accept his grateful thanks and his respect for her sagacity, with becoming modesty of course, but—accept it! That would be the feather she would wave in her hat; George's appreciation of her interest in his business.

The idea was more than brilliant; it was masterly. She admitted it.

For the remainder of the afternoon she covered

legal sheets of paper with awkwardly worded advertisements, discarding each and every one as too cold, too businesslike. Didn't all advertising articles say that display advertising must, in a catchy fashion, show the attractiveness of the goods to be sold? And wasn't George decidedly attractive? And wouldn't his services be attractive if anyone ever gave him a chance to furnish them? Well then! Discarding the models the attorney column used as too old-fashioned and slow, she worked on. She was willing to bet that "Reliable attorney will handle few good damage cases" and "Open evenings, husband and wife matters a specialty" got no more than a nibble at small affairs. George's business must not be small. He wanted big business. It would take a good big case to "make" George.

At last, when five o'clock rolled round, after two hours with tongue in cheek, she had evolved what she thought was a satisfactory item for insertion, a praiseworthy effort and one which would command attention. Undoubtedly! It was a peach of an ad!

MOST LAWYERS ARE CROOKS

I am honest, young, good looking, full of pep, single, and know the latest dodges. Why not give me a trial? Dammidge cases are my meat. Snappy divorces, and moving picture actresses see me before buying elsewhere. See me and save money.

She was a bit puzzled as to what address to give.

If she put George's office, any amount of small, insignificant cases, like ten dollars damage on a flivver, and that class, would come in. Maisie did not want those cases. She wanted a nice snappy breach of promise, hoped for sensations.

She preened herself contemplating her masterpiece, twinkled her long blob earrings, self-consciously adjusted the green-gemmed combs in her bobbed locks, smoothed the ruby-near-satin dress which was swell for nine eighty-five, as she waited for the clerk at the advertising counter to estimate its cost. The clerk, new to the work, merely counted the words and announced the price, then demanded her address.

"I don't want any address in the ad," she explained. "Just a box number at this office."

"Not to print," he assured her. "For office reference."

"Fair enough," Maisie replied and supplied the information. "You might phone me when there are any answers."

Thus when a more experienced employee was reviewing the day's crop of counter ads preparatory to sending them to the composing room, this masterpiece of Maisie's found itself scorned, rejected, and sent on to the department manager's desk for final disposition. After a hearty laugh at the supposed advertiser's sense of humor the manager spoke to his stenographer: "Great idea this fellow has—'most lawyers are crooks!' How on earth did this get accepted over the counter?"

"Inness says the new boy took it."

"Must be a new boy, all right. Must be a code of some kind. Find out from Central whose telephone number this is—" and after her report that it was George Dorsey, Attorney-at-Law, he whistled and shook his head.

"Take a letter," he said.

So the snappy ad together with its accompanying letter and the newspaper's check for the amount paid in, went into an envelope and were dropped into the mailbox before Maisie had walked half a dozen blocks east on First Street.

She had headed in that direction on a private and personal mission; there was a place down there in the less attractive part of town which was doing a little advertising on its own hook. Its manager claimed to have wardrobes of moving-picture actresses and society leaders, slightly reduced or even less so, for sale at great reductions—the wardrobes, that is. And Maisie had a ten dollar bill with which she hoped to purchase raiment suitable to wear when interviewing the flock of clients which must of necessity appear in answer to her ad. One had to look the part, she argued. Also, she sighed, they ought to have a new rug for George's reception room. The old one was the wasp 's nest. At least, if they could not have a new one, they should have a newer one.

As she went along the dingy street looking for the desired number, her eye was caught by the novel appellation "Noah's Ark," above the door of a shop.

Its entrance was stacked crazily with angled chairs instead of animals two by two; its window was a nightmare of decorative art. A ratty saddle reposed upon the bosom of a huge, gilt-framed mirror; coils of rope embraced a battered copper samovar; clumps of artificial flowers *rampant* upon a field of discouraged shoes *couchant;* rubber hose cheek by jowl with strings of pearls almost priceless—so near nothing *is* almost priceless isn't it?—a mammoth punchbowl whose former owner, no doubt enraged by prohibition, seemed to have taken a huge bite out of it.

"Ark!" said Maisie aloud. "I'll tell a weeping world Noah picked up the village treasures when the flood came. Gaw!" She was fascinated and delighted.

At that moment the proprietor, bowing a customer out, appeared on the sidewalk, looked east, looked west, then retired into the maze of wreckage within. A glance over his shoulder alighted upon Maisie and he returned to the doorway casually, looked hard at her, and she moved back to the window.

"He ain't as old as he ought to be for Noah," she reflected. "But he's uglier."

Then in small letters upon the window she noticed for the first time "Obadiah Jones" neatly printed. "I never thought o' Noah havin' a last name," she cogitated. "But at that it most likely would be Jones. However this ain't Noah, but Obadiah. Obadiah

Jones—" she murmured the name aloud. It had a familiar ring. Funny— Obadiah Jones——

Then it came. George had had a bad account against one Obadiah Jones. Obadiah had moved from a previous location and had never paid his back rent. George had tried in vain to collect it. There had been some good reason.

Two more customers, arm in arm, turned in at the Ark. They came out quickly with nice thick parcels under their arms. Obadiah came to the door and cast careful glances up the street, down, and across, then looked at Maisie. Wondering if there might be a chance for her to collect that account for George she had hung around, despite the fact that it was getting late. She paused at the door to see Obadiah conduct another customer toward a rack of rugs against a far wall. She peered in to see what manner of rug it was, but Obadiah did not like her peering. He came toward the door.

"Want something, miss?" he asked pointedly.

"I guess not." She shook her head. "I'm just studyin' about rugs."

"Well I haven't got any for sale—" he replied briskly. At Maisie's perplexed glance at the rug rack he added: "Them rugs is sold."

"Well I probably wouldn't a bought one anyway," she said, and went on.

Her lagging feet had betrayed her. The second hand clothing place was closed, so she walked back

unable to resist another look at Obadiah Jones. That *was* the fellow, surely! She had heard George talking over the telephone to the man whom Obadiah owed the money. If she would think hard, now—it was—Yes: It was three hundred and twenty-six dollars and eleven cents. She recited the amount parrotlike. That was it. And George told his client that this now Obadiah had gone bankrupt, whatever that was. At any rate, George couldn't get the money and he was to have had half! Half of—well! There ought to be a rug in it anyway. If Obadiah couldn't pay his debts he might give George a rug on account.

Luck was with her. Another second hand clothing store across the street beckoned, and there, just before they closed, she got a snappy creation in jade and orange. "Snappy sports togs" they called it, and the sports must have been snappy to stand it! Maisie adored it! Adored it eight dollars worth. In a tiny fitting room she exchanged her garments and came out arrayed in all her glory, most certain that Solomon had never been arrayed like this!

Her ruby near-satin in a bundle under her arms, she went back to call on Obadiah, as he seemed to keep late hours. Now he had one dim light burning in the rear of the shop and it looked worse than in the fading daylight. A customer, coming out, casually examined the street east and west and headed across in haste, being barely missed by a taxi driver, to the driver's evident regret. In his leap he dropped his

parcel, which thudded to the pavement. There was a splintering sound and something wet oozed out of the parcel. The man disappeared up an alley, followed by mutterings from Obadiah, who seemed afraid about something.

A policeman passed along the opposite curb but paid little attention to the little wet heap in the center of the street. Even as Maisie stared, Obadiah darted out and clutched the wet mass of paper and swept it out of traffic's way. Then he went back into his shop. The Ark. A moment later he was back inspecting the street.

"What you all the time standing here for, huh?" he demanded of Maisie.

"Why I was just—standing here," she retorted. "I'm thinking—" she added with dignity, "about buying a rug."

"Well, I haven't got no rugs," he replied sourly. "Two doors down."

At that moment a pedestrian hailed Obadiah. "Hey, Ob," he called, "Heffernan sent me over after that rug."

"All wrapped up," said Obie.

Maisie sighed. Everyone but her could buy a rug. Obadiah Jones owed three hundred—she walked boldly into the Ark.

"Say," she demanded crisply. "You Obadiah Jones?"

"Well, what if I am?" he countered. "I told you we ain't got any rugs for sale. I'm sold out. I wish

you'd go on and get what you want," he added peevishly. "I got to be closin' up."

"Yeh, you do keep open sort of late," she agreed. "Would you mind if I was to take a look at that rug over there hangin' up? Even if it ain't for sale I could get an idea as to the price, maybe. This place looks so cheap, you know." Heading for the rug-rack she passed Obadiah.

It was a bright rug, she noticed once she got close enough to see; purple and red and blue, with green cabbage roses. It would have looked swell in George's office.

"'Snice gay rug—" she said wistfully. "Sort of makes you cheerful to look at it. Maybe you'll get another like it sometime." She reached up to touch it; it was hung on a swinging rod which swayed toward her at the touch, but Obadiah leaped to hold it back.

"Hay, I told you there ain't nothin' here for sale—" he roared. "This store is sold out——"

The damage was done, however. In swinging, the rug had displayed a high row of shelves fastened to the wall behind it; and upon those shelves neat rows of bundles of assorted sizes. Obadiah's guilty conscience signalled to the "customer" who had been waiting for the package of rugs for Heffernan—all wrapped up—and the customer, needing but one warning, left hastily, closing the front door after him. Maisie was looking behind, at the bundles.

"These ain't more rugs?" she inquired politely. "I

thought maybe you had some cheaper ones you forgot about."

"No." Obadiah blustered.

"Well you needn't get so tough—I ain't tryin' to steal your rugs——"

"What's your business?" Obadiah took another tone. "Come on now, let's you and me talk sensible.

"Well if you ain't the queer bird!" retorted Maisie, not knowing the meaning of fear. "First you get mad and then you get chummy! You act like you don't want to sell anything in the place. Are you on commission or do you own the joint?"

"Commission!" Obie gasped. "Say—" he had gone pasty around the gills.

"Well if you're Obadiah Jones, which is a vurry unusual monniker, I sh'd think you'd be interested in my proposition. I was thinkin' I c'd help you out considerable—oh well, maybe it wouldn't a worked."

He looked at her and it made her feel creepy. She changed the subject. "That fellow jumped like the dickens, didn't he? The one that the cab pret' near got! When he dropped his bundle. I s'pose he'll be back again—bein' a customer of yours——"

If Obadiah Jones had been pasty before he was purple now. She *did* know what was in the parcel that dropped on the pavement. He might have known! Nobody ever dressed like that unless it was a disguise! In ten minutes time she had come back in other, crazier clothes! She was a detective as he had suspected.

Obadiah trembled; his jaw took on a harder line in an attempt to hide his fear. He took a step toward her but Maisie, with an air of not noticing his perturbation, stepped around a tattered leather couch and started toward the door. Before he could intercept her, she had reached a clear path among the heterogenous furniture.

"Here, you—wait!" called Obadiah tensely. "I got to talk to you. What do you mean by what you say? And coming in here?"

Maisie, however, had reached the door and opened it. She felt safer now. She turned airily. "Whadda I mean?" she inquired breezily. "I mean that I was lookin' for a rug but if you ain't got one to sell I'll be breezin' along. But—" with an eye to the office, "if you should ever need a lawyer, my boss, Mr. George Dorsey, is an extra good one and he is quite cheap! He's partic'larly good on divorces, but of course he takes all kinds of cases—except—" she remembered suddenly that George had said that he had no sympathy with breaking the prohibition law—"except bootleggers."

"Bootleggers!" Obadiah exploded the word harshly and with one leap had caught up with her and grasped her arm. "Say, you listen a minute."

It was clear to him now. This Dorsey had tried to collect a judgment against him and finding out it was quite uncollectible, had sent this young upstart here to blackmail him into paying that old judgment. No sir, not Obadiah Jones. That judgment was

settled by bankruptcy. He wouldn't be blackmailed.

On the other hand she had seen the dripping parcel and the shelf of wrapped bundles. Evidently this girl was not such a fool as she looked. Hanging around and talking about rugs—maybe it would be better to pay. But he had thought this old second hand store such a safe-looking place to carry on his business. It was a lot of money to pay for protection. He wondered if the day's receipts would amount to so much? His eyes went to a tarnished saxophone hanging high behind the door.

Maisie, not exactly frightened, was waiting for him to say something, pulling a little at her wrist. She followed his vision and saw the saxophone. She had always wanted to learn to play one!

"Now you," he said, breathing hard, "you tell me square! What do you want? Hanging around here—you work for that Dorsey, all right, what is it you're after? Come clean!"

"You let go o' my arm, you fresh thing! Whadda you s'pose I want? I want a rug—r-u-g! Is that plain English, or do I have to draw a diagram of one? You evidently got something on your mind and let me tell you right now you better keep it on your business—and you do better than keep askin' a customer over and over what they want."

Obadiah dropped his hand and stared. Gaining courage she went on: "And I thought as long as you was in business and evidently doin' so well, what with customers comin' in every minute, that as long

as you hadn't been able to pay that Mr. Hennaberry what you owed that you might let Geo—Mr. Dorsey have a rug sort of on account. And you get all het up and spout about nothin' for sale. It's mighty queer if you ask me." She shook her earrings at him.

"I knew it, I knew it!" moaned Obadiah, mopping his brow. "I knew all the time it was blackmail. With your talk about bootleggers and rugs—and your clothes out of a lunatic asylum. It's blackmail—but I suppose I got to pay. Stool pigeon!" he hissed at her, but it was a frightened hiss and did not scare Maisie.

"Well ain't you the grasshopper's lumbago—" she retorted with cutting dignity. "I ain't never been accused of that before an' I been accused of plenty!" She turned to go. "I'll certainly speak to Mr. Dorsey about——"

"Wait—I'll pay—I'll pay—" he moaned. "How much?"

"Three hundred and twenty-six dollars and eleven cents—" she replied automatically. She wasn't sure what it was all about, what with her mind on advertising, and rugs, and snappy sports models, and he said her clothes were out of a lunatic asylum! He should pay for that.

"And throw in that saxophone," she called.

Unbelievably he was taking it down. Thrusting one arm into its bell he drew forth rolls of currency.

"Will you take three hundred and call it square?" he hesitated.

"I'll say I won't." Seeing her advantage she followed it. "Three twenty-six and eleven cents."

Palsied, Mr. Jones counted out the sum in paper, adding the eleven cents from his pocket. "Take the saxophone—anyway—" he shouted, and "Get away from here now——"

"I'd like to get that rug—" she hesitated.

"I'll give it to you. Now listen!" The sweat had started out once more on his brow. "How do I know that this is the last? If I send that rug to you wherever you want, how do I know you won't come down here and blackmail me again?"

Maisie didn't know the answer. Obadiah thought she was stalling for greater profit. He thrust a twenty dollar bill at her.

"Here, buy yourself something," he wheedled, oily again. "And tell me where to send the rug. And once for all, will you stay away and let me alone? And write me a receipt for that money I paid you?"

"Sure I'll give you a receipt," Maisie replied haughtily. "Glad to, though I'm sure I ain't ever been caught liftin' other people's propitty yet."

She took an envelope he offered and scratched "Received from O. Jones $326.11 for Mr. Dorsey to collect from O. Jones," and handed it to him. "You send the rug to our office. I'll write the address," and did. "Remember, if you should need some collecting done, Mr. Dorsey is a whiz at it."

"I'll say he is—" grunted Mr. O. Jones. "Black-

mails 'em." He reflected that he had better move now, and start in business somewhere else.

Maisie thought the time had come to go. Whatever happened, she had collected that bad judgment and a rug and a saxophone, and had twenty dollars for her trouble—that would buy two snappy sports models. She had better leave before she woke up.

"Lemme know if I c'n ever do you a good turn—" she chirruped from the sidewalk.

"All the good turn you can do me is stay away from me, stay outta my life—" raged the now disgruntled Obadiah, bravely. Oh well, all sorts of protection was expensive. He had moved before, and he could do it again. But he would send that rug! If he didn't, she would probably hunt him up at his new stand!

Maisie strode away exuberant, saxophone in hand. She even gave it a tentative toot as she walked along. Wouldn't George be pleased? She must get down early in the morning.

Early, however, was not early enough. George was there before her, and the early mail had been there before George. Black hate in his face, he met her at the door of the office, and his voice was awful.

"Miss Snclair!"

Maisie smoothed down the snappy-orange-and-jade-sports model and smiled broadly, hoping to avert the storm. "Yes, Mr. Dorsey," she cooed. "What's on your mind?"

"This!" And he waved beneath her slightly pug nose a letter. "Read it."

Maisie took it, looked, and was stricken dumb. She did not even hear the outer door open. This is what she read:

Mr. George Dorsey,
711 Westmore Bldg.
Dear Sir:

Through inadvertence your advertisement for insertion in the Attorney-at-Law Column was accepted at the counter, but it would be impossible for this paper to print an advertisement so worded. For the usual form used by attorneys we refer you to the daily columns. We are herewith returning our check for the amount you paid and trust that you will wish to run a revised copy of the ad.

Yours very truly——
Hixon.
Mgr. Adv. Dept.

And enclosed was her masterpiece!

"Oh Mr. Dorsey, I thought it was such a snappy ad!" she said, artlessly.

"Snappy ad!" shouted George. "Why in the name of all that is good did you ever think of an outrageous thing like that to do! Why? Good Heavens! If that thing had got printed I could have been disbarred! Of all the unethical——"

Professional ethics, as has been said, had never

been mentioned to Maisie, but now she got her first news of it. "I thought you'd have more business if you advertised," she broke in. "I wanted to help."

"Get more business! I'd like you to get it into your dumbbell head that I'm capable of getting my own business. I can't see what in thunder makes you think of the awful things you do!" he raged. That was another thing that made George wild, that he had to rage at her to make her understand things.

"I wanted to help—" she reiterated.

"Well I can get along without your help all the way round. You're through."

"You mean—I'm fired?"

"Yes! Fired! I declare, I don't see what else you could expect after a stunt like this. I'm the laughingstock of that newspaper office now."

"All right," she choked, and turned to the reception room. And there sat a man.

"Mr. Dorsey?" he inquired.

Maisie nodded dumbly and went toward the closet where she had hung her heliotrope tam-o'-shanter. She was fired. A tear trickled down. The visitor looked sympathetically at her. He had heard it all.

George appeared in the doorway. "Oh, Mr. Hennaberry," he said. "Good morning. You're here about that Obadiah Jones collection. I thought I made it clear in my letter that he has gone through bankruptcy——"

Maisie had perked up at that. Her job might be gone, but there was one last favor she could do for

George. Poised like a bird for flight she moved toward the inner office, passed George, and behind him whispered:

"Hey—wait a minute. Don't tell him that. Come in here first."

At the sound of her whisper George turned, saw the cabalistic signs Maisie was making from within his sanctum and stopped short.

"Excuse me one moment—" he said. "Just a second, Mr. Hennaberry—" He turned with dignity. "I've just had a very harrowing experience, sir, with my office girl, and have had to discharge her. I will finish——"

"Certainly—" said the caller.

"You mustn't tell him you can't get it—" Maisie hissed when George had closed the door, but suspiciously. "I got it right here—in my sock. Every last jitney of it! And a rug for your office, and a saxophone!" She didn't think it necessary to mention the twenty dollar bill. That money—and a rug—and a saxophone—George stared——

"Are you crazy, Miss Snclair?" he demanded, coldly.

But she had coyly turned her back and delving into the aforementioned receptacle had brought out the roll of money and now laid it on the desk.

"Three hundred and twenty-six dollars and eleven cents—" she said. "The eleven cents is wrapped inside it. You see, I was in that bird's place—Obadiah Jones—and he acted like he had the heebie-

jeebies and something was on his mind something terrible and he asked me if he paid that bill if I'd stay away from there and I said yes for a rug for the office. I don't know what was eatin' him but I thought I might's well ride a good horse while I had it, an' all I done was ask him for a rug on account. An' you get half—ain't that the flea's roller skates?" At the end of a breath she stopped.

"I don't understand—" George was murmuring dreamily, looking at the money——

"That don't make you no intelleckshial dwarf, neither do I," she said earnestly. "Only you tried to get the money and something went sour on you and I was in this Noah's Ark and believe me if Noah had all that stuff in th' Ark it woulda sunk and he hollered a lot about blackmail and gave me the money; an' anyway you should get a harelip because we got it. I guess if there's business to be done in this office it don't matter who does it, does it?"

Dignity accompanied the last words, even though she had raised her voice so that it was distinguishable through the closed door. And then, recalling that she had lost her job, Maisie walked out that door, downcast. The visitor, otherwise Mr. Hennaberry, rose to enter, George was still standing dumb. Mr. Hennaberry thought a word of defense might not come amiss.

"I happened to hear the young lady," he said to his attorney, "and, young fellow, don't you think

maybe you'll search quite a while before you'll find a spirit of loyalty and service like hers?"

"Eh?" blinked George.

"Of course, I don't know what the trouble is, but I gather that the young lady has got into trouble trying to help you in some way. In the face of a thing like that, it might be well to stop and think, son." He was an old man, and he meant it kindly.

"Well, g'bye," said Maisie from outside. "I'm gone."

"Say," called Hennaberry, "if you haven't another position, young lady, suppose you come around to see me. I think I could find room in my office for a girl that takes her business to heart. If you're anxious enough about your business to get fired trying to help, you ought to be valuable. I like that sort of people around me."

George, looking in bewilderment from the money in his hand to the man in the doorway now put the hand, and the money, in his pocket. He said the only thing there was to be said:

"Oh—I'll not be dispensing with Miss Snclair's services, after all."

"You mean I ain't fired? Oh boy, ain't that like money from home for bail?" the girl warbled.

As George came to the doorway to confirm his statement she whispered: "Make him think you collected that yourself. Make a swell impression—you know!"

And as he closed the door she heard him say: "Now, Mr. Hennaberry, although that was a matter that seemed absolutely closed through bankruptcy, by a clever stroke we were able—" the door closed.

Maisie hung up her tam-o'-shanter again, joyfully. "I ain't fired again!" she remarked happily to the world. And her eye falling upon the masterpiece of advertising, lying on her desk, she consigned it to the wastebasket fiercely. Then she grinned. "Oh well," she reflected, "the advertising manager, and Obadiah Jones—at least they know that George is a lawyer and they didn't know it before. And we've got a new rug for the office. Laugh that off!"

While inside George was counting out half of three hundred and twenty-six dollars and eleven cents.

III

WEIRD ISN'T THE WORD

SURELY, thought Maisie, a few days after her Obadiah Jones experience, George will be tickled to death when I tell him this—what a lovely morning it is—isn't the world grand? All this because of something tightly clutched in a feverish hand as she wended her way to the office.

As every day teaches the alley cat to dodge tin cans, so every day was teaching Maisie—something. She had learned to copy some of her clothes from other stenographers (sometimes with startling effects) and now! She had learned about stenography! George would have to admit now that she was not merely office help. For the proof was in this thrice-precious diploma she carried; last night—a night of nights—Maisie had been assured that she was competent to take the dictation of the English-speaking world—if they didn't give it too rapidly. It may have been her entire willingness to absorb knowledge, or her anxiety to please, or it may have been the chance that the final examination, chosen at random, had been lucky for her.

An exercise in alphabetic progression rather than

a connected discourse had been dictated, from a teacher's manual which Maisie had run across sometime before. Maisie, practicing this shorthand in odd hours, had made a game of that particular exercise, going over it again and again. Consequently her record at the finish had been wonderful, in fact it was almost past understanding of the night-school authorities, but now she proudly bore to the office the assurance that never again would she have to use the longhand which irked him.

One step at a time. Maybe in time her spelling would improve of it own volition, under its own power, as it were.

But things didn't go right, somehow. Instead of walking in pride into George's office and laying down the rolled triumph, this diploma, standing back modestly to hear his delighted approval, Maisie was startled to hear voices in George's room, this early. A glance at the clock! Nine thirty—and her wrist watch—won on a punch-board—said eight forty-five! She was half an hour late. Trying to close the door silently she turned in haste and "grss-s-s-s-s" a pocket of her new green dress caught on the door handle, necessitating quick work with a safety pin. There was a cold silence broken by the disapproving voice of her employer.

"May I suggest, Miss Snclair, that you choose some less public place for your—er——"

Startled, Maisie dropped both the pocket and the

safety pin, also the hem of her skirt which had been raised to facilitate matters. "Just tore it on the door—" she scowled, but cheerfully. "Ain't that tough luck, though?"

"Had you noticed the hour?" he persisted unfeelingly.

"I ain't noticed nothin' else!" she assured him brightly. "That's s'm more tough takin'. This doggone watch used to keep pretty good time—for the six bits it cost me tryin' to win it. I'm terrible sorry."

George's mouth almost softened, hardened again. Even with the torn pocket, somehow Miss Snclair looked neater, more businesslike today. It was the diploma that had done it! But he didn't know.

She hung her gay little hat in the closet and sat down at her desk. She shook the offending watch, offered it to him to prove its perfidy—hands not yet pointing to nine—, with a sigh wound it tightly and opened her typewriter case.

"Some dictation, Miss Snclair," said George sourly, eyeing the gash in her garment. "And suppose you retire and—er—mend that first!"

The petticoat displayed beneath the green was of a particularly virulent shade of crimson.

"Oh, gosh yes—" said Maisie, and then corrected herself. "I mean, absotively. I'll have it fixed and be back in two shakes." Disappearing into the depths of the coat closet, through what must have been contortionist's methods she emerged a moment later

neatly pinned together and with hardly any of the pin showing. "'s that good enough?" she asked, notebook in hand.

Ignoring her disposition to discuss the matter, George plunged rapidly into the business in hand, so that after a moment Maisie was so worried that she had to resort to longhand. Oh, well, everything had gone wrong. Anyway, they had a new case, which was surprising in itself.

More to the point in surprise, it was a case which George musta gone out and dug up for himself, for Maisie knew nothing about it. And a pretty darn good case, too. A damage suit defense, where the plaintiff was asking fifty thousand damages for injuries suffered when the defendant's automobile had struck her. It was a mystery where George had got it.

Only yesterday, and always previous to that time, Maisie had been of the opinion that a few snappy damage cases now and then would tone down some of these wild-cat drivers and teach 'em that streets was intended for walkin' purposes and now! In one short hour her mind read something like this: Imagine a party wantin' fifty thousand dollars just because they prob'ly was too lazy to get outta the way when a traffic signal was changed or something! Maisie was nothing if not partisan.

All during the dictation, which was technical and uninteresting, Maisie's mind raced back to the precious diploma. She ventured to use the adored shorthand after the first half hour. There was nothing

hard to remember about "proceeding on a street running north and south, in a southerly direction" and "approximately fifteen feet from an approaching said intersection." Then too, there was a diversion when George talked over the telephone with the client whose case this was.

"You've been to the hospital?" George said into the instrument. "And that while she was treated there the case was never formally discharged? Yes—why? Oh—because she wouldn't give them any information about herself you say? . . . I see. Well, yes. . . . Well that might point to the fact that it wasn't her real name but that doesn't matter legally, except in case she is a married woman instead of a single one as she claims, she could only collect damages on the injury. The second count, for doctors' and nurses' and hospital bills would not hold them—if she had a husband. . . . See what you can find out. . . . Yes. . . ."

There was more and interminable dictation then. Once back at her desk it seemed that longhand would have been safer in these turbulent times; for very little of George's dictation was based upon Maisie's proud "abject, beatitude, carnivorous, delicate, ethnology, frolicsome" of the examination.

Long she struggled and bitter was the warfare, but at last she laid the typed answer on George's desk and fled to lunch. This was a bad time to eat, also; after he had been fed George might have been better humored. One experiment in "what was it you

said about? . . ." had frozen her, so she had guessed at a good many things. They didn't sound exactly right, but surely the little pothooks hadn't been wrong. Had she not a diploma? But—George was likely to be pretty mad.

How mad she had not long to find out. The answer, heavily underscored, lay on her desk when she returned. But that was nothing! Behind that desk sat another girl! Swarthy of skin, lemon-colored voile as to decoration and blue-ribbon as to manner.

"Well!" gasped Maisie. "S'prise party, or something?"

"You the girl who used to work here?" inquired the other.

Used to work here. That came hard.

"I been tryin' to read your notes, but I can't. And I don't guess you could either," she said calmly.

"Will you come in, please, Miss Snclair?" came the dreaded voice from within. A lamb to the slaughter, Maisie tiptoed in.

"Miss Snclair, a change in the office becomes absolutely necessary. If it seems abrupt, I am giving you two weeks salary as well as the week which would be due you on Saturday." He didn't even look up.

For a moment only was Maisie dumb. Then she squared her thin little shoulders and laughed.

"Abrupt! My great-grandmother's glass eye! Abrupt ain't no decent word. Abrupt is slow poison to the shock this give me. But don't you go to worryin' about it, I spose you got your reasons. I

may be thick but I ain't got blind staggers. I begin to see why you been suggestin' that I quit for some little time, but your taste ain't just what I thought you'd pick on. I'd a expected you to land on some real class with a permanent wave and s'perior eyebrows at least. They give an office such a air!"

"Miss Snclair," said George, beginning to rise to her bait, which he hated even while he did it. "What I must have in this office is accuracy. Can you imagine my turning a document in at the county clerk's office——"

"'At's where that nice MacDonald works—" Maisie murmured.

"A document with a sentence worded like this? 'Defendant on a street was running north and south with apprehensively fifteen feet off and preaching sad introspection.' 'Injury' was made to read 'engineer,' and 'ingenuity' came out 'ingenue.' It's too much, Miss Snclair. You can't say I haven't warned you. I've done nothing but warn. In letting you go I feel that you will have little trouble getting into the movies—for which I think you would be eminently fitted. But a law office? No, Miss Snclair, No!"

In view of the fact that but for Maisie there might have been no "law" in this office, on occasion, this was rather hard, but George was a desperate man.

It was a blow, despite the assurance that she could get another job. Maisie had not wanted another job. She wanted this job. Working for George—poor George! How on earth would he get by without

her? Oh well, after all, that was his lookout. So apathetically Maisie took the check and turned to leave. There was absolutely no use in telling George that it was because she had a diploma from a shorthand school that she had made so many mistakes. And it would do no good to blame the torn new dress or the wrist watch. She nodded amiably at him.

But one thing was plain. George was bellowing at her because he did not believe all the things he said. All right, lesson number seven hundred! Bellowing gives one away as uncertain of one's position. A quiet firmness, such as he had started out with, carried more conviction. And conviction was one of Maisie's specialties.

"As I've said before, I don't suffer much from a yen to go into the movies having tried 'em in their infancy—" she gulped. "They wasn't quite so dangerous then before they cut their teeth, but now they're likely as not to bite you. And hydrophobia ain't a pretty song to sing. As for gettin' a job, that's the least that's blightin' my life. G'bye, Mr. Dorsey. I wish you many happy returns o' the day after a way o' speakin'," she continued. "I've about decided to be a lawyer myself. Nothin' scares me, on account o' bein' brought up, you might say, with lions roarin' under my bed. And I don't reckon law is so hard to learn. There's plenty doin' it."

Was there a sarcastic gleam in that amber eye

turned so innocently upon him? George wondered.

"A worthy ambition, Miss Snclair," he said stiffly. Why didn't she go. Shame began to color the back of his neck, burn his cheeks. He felt as if he had struck a child in anger.

Maisie departed, her worldly fortune in her gay little purse, choking back a tear, ramming the little hat harder over her eyes that no one might see. Oh well, she might have time to learn to play the saxophone.

Jobs, in August, weren't hung on street lights, at least. Dark were the corners they haunted and they dodged the wary hunter. MacDonald had gone to Canada on a vacation; Mr. Hennaberry was in Mexico seeing about some land. Too bad she didn't know someone who had gone to Europe, she reflected. It would be nice to have friends at all points of the compass. Funny, wasn't it, how two weeks pay for one week's work didn't last two weeks when one wasn't working?

The movies were swell, to look at if not to work in. They kept you from forgetting it was mealtime. But with only ninety cents left and your landlady having found crackers and cheese twice this week in the bureau drawer and having spoken about tea leaves in the bathtub pipe, a cafeteria sign is wonderful. But a cafeteria with a sign "Girl Wanted" is a godsend. And right across the street from the courthouse—that was a miracle. In fifteen minutes

Maisie was dishing up vegetables with the best of them and wondering if George ever came there to eat. Lots of lawyers did, and he should have.

Weeks, smelling of vegetables and meats and steam, sneaked by; George never came demanding spinach or string beans but that dimmed not the bitter memory of her old job, for bitter it was. Maisie had liked that job. It was hers. Out of nothing she had made it, handpainted it with her fine Italian hand, and she could scarcely bear the thought of that swarthy girl in lemon colored voile treating it roughly.

Though her present position guaranteed the rent and three meals, just as the other had and little more, Maisie hankered for the law. Busy at meal hours only, she began to haunt the courthouse, visiting trials, watching the tactics of attorneys, drinking in cross-examinations, now and then almost understanding the reason for seemingly useless questions. Oh, it was a profession all right, this law. Maisie meant to cleave to it as long as they both should live. She wished she might see George try a case, but he never appeared.

Then mechanically pouring the liquor off carrots one day, her ear was besieged by conversation at the meat counter near her. "Tevis" was the magic word, the opening shot fired, and "Tevis" the law-leaning Maisie recalled, was the name of George's client in that damage case. Maisie forgot beets and tomatoes and worked both ears.

"Yes, I'm winning my case against Mr. Tevis,

Mrs. Brent. At least I think I'm winning it," a woman was saying.

"Well that's fine. I heard about it. But you've moved away from Forty-ninth street, haven't you?" asked the other.

"Oh yes, when I talked with my lawyer right after the accident, I moved. I didn't want anyone on the case to find out I was a 'Mrs.'" The first woman grinned knowingly.

"Vamping him?" the other pointed to Brussels sprouts.

"Well hardly. But since I have a husband, although heavens knows where he is, I couldn't get anything for my doctor bills or hospital without he sued too, so you see—I'm single for the present."

"I see," said Mrs. Brent, sliding her tray another inch. "Here, girl, some of those onions!" Maisie jumped—dished the onions. "Then you still don't know where Henry is? Haven't you ever heard from him?"

"No, nor I don't want to," was the reply. "String beans."

"Is the trial today?" Mrs. Brent asked, passing to the salad counter.

"Sure, started this morning. That's how I happen to be eating here."

Tevis, suit for damages, wouldn't tell the hospital who she was, courthouse cafeteria, fool for luck, so ran the course of Maisie's fertile brain. The Lord had got her this job as sure as anything. Even unto

vegetables she was meant to help George. It was fate.

"Here, girl, tomatoes and carrots," stormed a man. "Where's your mind?"

"Yes sir, tomatoes and carrots, carrots and tomatoes," Maisie chirped idiotically, waggling her earrings. "Right here just in time—got it down in shorthand——"

The man pushed his tray along hastily, looking back fearfully as if he expected her to become violent any minute, as indeed he did. Vegetables paraded unseen and unsmelled then, during the next half hour which was six hours long according to the punchboard six-bit watch. Two o'clock would be the end of that half hour, and by two o'clock Maisie had to go, for that was when afternoon court session convened. She was supposed to work until three. What should she do?

It was one-forty-five and still they came, the vegetable hunters; still they pointed at cauliflower and fried potatoes. Maisie was angry. The cafeteria manager was absent. Doubtless gone out to eat. Oh well, if he didn't come back he didn't; and that was that. And if he didn't, she might as well not come back either, but she was going. Going she was. Maisie was on the trail of her old job, the job that belonged to her. Taking care of George.

At five minutes to two she doffed the white apron and calmly walked away from behind the counter. Her hat—in the closet in the kitchen—would have to stay there. Somebody would stop her if she tried to

get it. Hatless she crossed the street and climbed the familiar brownstone steps.

At the county clerk's office she encountered MacDonald, the genial deputy, who raised an arm in greeting. "Hello, Nunc," he cried, and came over to shake hands. "What's the matter? Don't see you running the business of the county any these days. Staying inside?"

"I ain't exactly practicing law these days," she laughed. "Guess you might say I'm broadcastin' the fame o' the great Amurrican pastime—I got a full house on trays."

"You mean that you were fired?" sympathetically.

"Fired!" Maisie chuckled. "Fired is one word an' exploded is another. I'm workin' on the outside right now but I'll be back in the office in a few days." And she believed it.

"Outside for your health?"

"Just that. Clear outside. But I'm much better now."

Away went Maisie, with the court calendar's direction as to courtroom. Through the crack between the swinging doors she peeped, and, sure enough, inside the oaken railing sat George. Court had just convened. The judge was coming from his chambers and a deathly stillness held the crowd. They got to their feet solemnly and waited until the bailiff droned out his funny little chorus—"Hear ye—hear ye—is now in session" that being all Maisie could understand of it. She wanted to go in, but she had to have some ad-

vice first. Down the corridor was a man who carried a brief case. Maisie flew toward him and touched his arm.

"'Scuse me," she stammered. "You a lawyer?"

"Yes," he replied. "What can I do for you?"

"You can do a whole whale of a lot," she replied. "You can spout a little law for me. I'll pay." She dug her slim purse from its hiding place in the hosiery and drew the man aside. "Here's what I gotta know." She told her story rapidly. "Now what good will it do George?"

"Oh—" the courtly attorney smiled. "Well, there's a very nice point there, I should say." He discoursed for ten minutes by the six-bit wrist watch.

"That's plenty," said Maisie after that. "George'll have to figure out the rest of it. How much?"

"It is a pleasure to serve one of the legal profession," he replied with his eyes twinkling. "And in case that situation does not materialize, you might drop around at my office. Intelligence is at a premium, these days." He gave her his card.

"I s'pose that means you might give me a job," Maisie smiled. "Thanks—but George needs me."

Back at her objective, Maisie slid through the crevice between noiseless swinging doors and into an empty seat, looking about her. There in the third row was Mrs. Brent, come to watch the trial. All right: she should see something for her money.

George was listening to what another attorney was saying to the judge, expounding from a volume

he held. After a moment when Maisie waited for George to look round, and he didn't, she tiptoed over and leaned towards the bailiff, smiling so brightly that he was forced to smile back in self-defense at this dishevelled little person in a perky green dress, with scarlet sandals on restless feet, and with the light of courage in her shining amber eyes. Then the bailiff went over and whispered to George, who turned in that swivel chair as if his head and shoulders were manipulated by strings. At sight of Maisie, moist and breathless, he frowned, but rose and came toward the fence which separated the sheep from the goats—her idea—and with George almost on the wrong side.

"If you wish to see me, Miss Snclair," said George stiffly. "Please come to the office."

"When? After you lose this case?" she retorted, undaunted. "Is the defense over yet?"

"Not gone on," he replied, puzzled.

"Well, I gotta be a witness," she hissed fiercely.

This touched George. Poor, loyal, earnest little thing, she wanted to watch him try a case! A wild wish that she had chosen some other case to watch came over him; they had so little to go on in this one. Then wrath that she had bothered him flowed back. "Spectators are permitted," he said, turning away.

"Say—I know a lot about this—you'll win it if you get me up there—" she insisted.

George gulped. This was Maisie's great moment,

carefully built up. An audience would have held its breath.

"What do you know?"

"That woman's married——"

Then came words of great portent. "Plaintiff rests!" and George had to get to business.

"Just you let me in," she wheedled. "I'll do the talkin'. I got a card or two up my sleeve that'll take any ace she has. You'll knock the pins out from under her."

It was a wild and futile hope; but this amazing person had always landed on her feet—George bit his lip and took what the gods offered. He opened the gate and Maisie was inside, with the sheep.

George got right down to business then. He called his client and two rather indifferent witnesses who didn't know much. They weren't sure at all that it wasn't Tevis's fault that the woman was struck; but they didn't think she had been as badly hurt as she claimed. That was because she had walked away after the accident. They thought Tevis had signalled, because they waited for him to pass before crossing the street themselves. They both admitted, on cross-examination, that they might be wrong.

George got paler with each moment. His three witnesses through, he looked at Maisie. He was afraid to put her on the stand and afraid not to. Maisie, out of her street-gamin wisdom, knew his calm for the dead fear that it was and got to her feet with a

leap, saying brightly "Me next?" to the amazement of the judge.

George wet his lips with his tongue, swallowed heavily, and prayed. Maisie sat down in the witness chair in pride! Then she got a bit frightened, raised her left hand instead of her right to take the oath, but got through it.

"Like a marriage ceremony, isn't it?" she conversed chattily with the judge, who turned to stare with astonishment. Then she gave her name in a gay voice.

"An' I'm waitin' on the vegetables across the street," she confided.

There was a silence.

"Well?" said the judge, at last, looking toward George.

In the voice of one condemned, George began: "Miss Snclair—" he stammered.

"I tell you, Judge," chatted Maisie. "This is something of a shock to Mister Dorsey here, y' see he never knew till a minute ago that I was mixed in this, an' I ain't after a manner o' speakin', mixed in, only I got a earful that I gotta spill right now. But he don't know what to ask me 'cause he don't know what I know."

The judge surveyed the little figure; took in the scarlet sandals, the green dress, neatly mended with not even a pin showing, looked at the disarranged mass of bobbed hair and the honest eyes. "Your name?" he said again.

"Maisie St. Clair," said Maisie. "With accent on the Sin—though it ain't spelled that way. And I know a lot if you'll lemme tell it."

"This is most unusual—" the judge went on. "But I suppose you may give whatever testimony you have."

"I object!" cried the plaintiff's attorney, rising. "I think, your honor, we should have some idea as to what manner of testimony this witness has—we don't know——"

"Neither does Mr. Dorsey," put in Maisie.

"At what part of the case is her testimony directed—" the other spluttered.

"I can tell you that," Maisie howled gleefully. "All I want to say is that she isn't single, as she says she is, but is married and don't know where her husband is and she moved from Forty-ninth street so nobody would know it and that Mrs. Brent sitting down in the third row knows it and if one part o' her test'mony is a lie why maybe the rest is too, an' George could prove that it wasn't no good about how she was hurt an'——"

"I object! I object! I object!" Plaintiff's attorney was crying.

"It's a lie!" shrieked the plaintiff. Then spying her friend Mrs. Brent in the audience she gave her a murderous look. "Double crosser—" she screamed.

"I move this all be stricken from the record—" cried her lawyer.

"Look, she's trying to beat it—" howled Maisie. "Brent is—she knows—"

The bailiff moved toward the outer door, sensing something important in all this, and the woman dropped back into her chair trembling.

"Order in the court—" bellowed the judge. "Motion to strike will be ruled on later."

George had seen the light. He was on his feet.

"I am willing to excuse this witness provided I can recall her later," he said. "And I call Mrs. Brent to the stand."

"I'm through?" asked Maisie, disappointed.

There was a hasty whispering between the plaintiff and her attorney. He now arose, red of face. "Your honor," he said, "because of the fact that we have no witnesses to refute this outrageous accusation, we move to dismiss without prejudice."

This of course meant nothing to Maisie but the judge seemed to understand it.

"Under the circumstances, I cannot see a dismissal without prejudice," he said. "But I am willing to dismiss with prejudice provided the plaintiff pays the defendant's costs."

That meant that the plaintiff had no privilege of filing a further suit in the matter. She was through.

Of course George didn't mind. It meant that he won his case without trial. The plaintiff hurriedly gathered up her belongings and was ready to leave, and the judge so ruled. Dismissed. With prejudice.

"An' it's all over, easy as that!" Maisie cried, swinging a scarlet sandal. "Like water on fireworks, an' I was lookin' forward to some fun."

The most astonished judge in this courthouse's forty departments looked at Maisie and shook his head. There was one thing he wanted to know. "Just a moment, young lady," he said. "Will you tell me how you happened to know that point of law about perjury in one part of testimony laying the remainder open to attack?"

"Oh, that," giggled Maisie. "I asked a lawyer. Little things like that might come in handy when I get to practicin' myself."

"They might, indeed," gasped the judge. Maisie slipped from her chair, seeing that George was leaving. "Well, g'by," she said politely. "Awfly glad to have met you!" It was notable that the judge called a recess a moment later. "Surprise witness!" he muttered.

"Well, Miss Snclair," said George, in the corridor. "You certainly have done us a favor."

"Favor is no name for it," cried the client, Tevis. "And let me tell you, young lady, you may name your own reward."

"Would you mind telling me how you happened to know about the case?" he added, as Maisie bashfully was silent. "Or how you happened to come to the trial?"

"Oh, I used to work for Geo—Mr. Dorsey," said

Maisie. "And when the Lord put that inf'mation my way, I knew o' course I'd got to spill it."

"You used to work for Dorsey?" Tevis looked from one to the other.

"Yeah. I got fired the day he got your case," she explained. "And that's a good one, too, 'cause I'm fired from my new job right now for walkin' out on them to come to this trial. Ain't that the canary's waist-line? My jobs do have a way o' walkin' out on me."

George, who had regained his voice, was now determined to do the handsome thing, be it ever so painful. "Well, Miss Snclair," he said largely. "You needn't worry about your job. Come on up and see me at the office—" He writhed, but remembered that the new paragon had not turned out any too well. But there was no denying that Maisie had earned her return——

"Oh thank you, Mr. Dorsey," Maisie beamed. "Ain't it like hearin' 'Not Guilty' from a jury that coulda hung you?"

"But I'd really like to reward the little lady—" said Tevis.

"Oh, thank you—" said Maisie, remembering bribe stories. "I'm pure but honest!" and she winked at George.

"You might—present Miss Snclair with a wrist watch—" said George, becoming human. "Her old one isn't very reliable."

"It will be waiting you at the office—when do you begin?"

"Monday," said George. After all, it was a struggle.

"Monday," said Tevis.

"Monday," said Maisie. "Say, you better get it to me by Saturday night. Otherwise I might get fired Monday before I start."

"I'll do that—" said Mr. Tevis. "The address?"

"Well, g'bye, all," said Maisie a moment later. "I gotta go and see if they'll lemme have my hat. See you Monday. Don't drive your car up any dark alleys."

"Dorsey—" said Tevis, as the scarlet sandals went down in the elevator, "there's something weird about that girl. She's almost too wise to be true."

"Weird isn't the word," said George fervently. "There isn't one."

IV

SWAPS—ALL SORTS

LOOKING at her dainty white gold wrist watch, Maisie reflected that she might have known there was a catch in it somewhere. Not in the wrist watch, for it glittered, had real works and kept time and everything. One of the best watchmakers' names glittered across its face and it was set with sapphires. It was perfect. It was just that things were going too smoothly, so this notice George laid on her desk hadn't surprised her at all. Something was bound to happen.

The mere fact that the building which housed their tiny establishment had been sold to the city for municipal use and that they would have to find other quarters, was as nothing. There were plenty of office buildings. And they had until November and this was the middle of September. Nothing to worry about. George could find an office, easy as that.

It was that George didn't look for one that was the trouble. For the mere reason that George fell ill on the second day after the arrival of the notice. Nor did he take a dignified illness in which case one could have gone to a hospital to see him, and taken flowers;

no, he had got mumps! Aside from the inconvenience, there was the idiocy of it! Maisie fumed when his landlady telephoned; one person who had no business to get mumps was a young fellow who was just beginning to build up a law practice and reputation; more especially a young attorney who had to move out of his office.

The process of elimination was short. With George removed, who was there to get an office? No one but Maisie herself. Very well; and as long as one had to get new offices, why not refurnish at the same time, have an all new place, and surprise George! She could read the ads—she was still a firm believer in advertising. Somebody might have an office for rent; someone else might have even less clients than George and want to sell their furniture; the mere matter of money to do all this—she brushed that aside. Money—what was money? Merely a smooth pavement over which to advance where you wanted to go. If the pavement ended, where did one walk? One took to the gravel or the dirt road. Gravel and dirt had no terrors for Maisie.

In searching for the Wanted Column, her eye stumbled over an item hitherto unknown—and there were a lot of those she admitted. It was SWAPS—ALL SORTS. Maisie had a saxophone. She had been too busy to learn to play it. Maybe there was someone in the world who craved that instrument? Sure enough, there was!

"Well ain't that like hot water in the bathroom

after eight o'clock?" she chortled. "Posilutely a fool for luck. Here's a bird wants a sax and got a typewriter to trade for it. Right there's a bird who wants a typewriter and has got a barber chair—now there oughta be someone who wants a barber chair——"

An idea was percolating. Now it burst in melodious bubbling. George wouldn't be at the office for a month; there wouldn't be any real business; time would hang heavy. Maisie wanted to furnish a new office. Why not answer all these advertisements and maneuver all these trades, keep occupied and incidentally trade around until she got what she wanted? It would be a lark and might be profitable. With beaming countenance she turned back to the ad of the musically ambitious person and informed him, via the telephone, that she had the instrument for him. Yes, he could call the following day.

That deal satisfactorily adjusted, with a typewriter as basis for operations, she started systematically at the top of the swap column and worked down. With every advertiser she communicated either by telephone or by letter. And there were three columns of them! The next day things would happen.

Things did, beginning early. The typewriter was a better one than the battered wreck Maisie was used to thumping, so she set it in place and put George's old one out to swap. By ten o'clock a goodly lot of things had been added to it. A set of books on salesmanship, for which she had traded two unmatched chairs from George's office and two dollars in cash.

Then came the barber chair, but her treasury was depleted by seven dollars more. She began to think. If she were going into this business to make a profit, she couldn't always pay out. She had to take in the "to boot" not give it. Another idea!

From then on she asked everyone to leave their wares to be exchanged for them or sold, paying nothing. She answered the Swap Column that day in her spare time. Business was good. By five o'clock there were quite a lot of things around the office; two burnt leather pillows, a cornet, a derby hat and a set of golf sticks lay in the barber chair; a wardrobe trunk stood by the door, topped by a radio set. A bridge lamp with a lovely silken shade hovered over a rusty vacuum cleaner, and four grain sacks filled with chicken feed leaned against an overstuffed rocker. People certainly wanted to get rid of funny things. So far no one wanted to get rid of office furniture, but this was only the second day. Anyway, if she got any, she had no place to put it. The place was full. She had to find an office.

That, really, was very easy.

In the best building on Broadway, Maisie walked nonchalantly into the rental department and was met with a smile. Yes indeed; they had a lovely suite on the ninth. They would be glad to show it. They did. It was ideal. There was a long, narrow reception lobby, with three connecting doors down either side. These doors, they explained kindly, were to the private chambers. Yes, there were six private offices. An

attorney with a large practice would need the entire suite, wouldn't he? Brief clerk, private secretary, trial associate, justice court man—oh yes indeed. *And* his library!

"Oh, I'm quite sure this would be just what Ge—Mr. Dorsey is looking for," gurgled Maisie. "We're so darned cramped right now. Why, I even have to have my desk in the main waitin' room! An' I'm his pers'nal sec'tary! Isn't that disgustin'?" She sniffed.

"An' them other two rooms would do for two other lawyers Mr. Dorsey is thinkin' of takin' in as—as junior soshiates!" she went on glibly. "An' the rent —not that it matters——?"

"Two seventy-five—" said the blasé one, whose hair was slick with patent formula.

"A day?" asked Maisie, startled. That was a funny way to rent.

The personage laughed pleasantly at her wit. "Or two hundred and fifty, on a year's lease," he added.

Two hundred and fifty! She had thought he meant two dollars and seventy five cents! Two seventy-five! A month! And George was paying thirty dollars where they were!

She gulped, turning her gleaming amber eyes on the person. "Quite reas'nable, I'm suah—" she turned away. "Mr. Dorsey is in conf'rence and can't be disturbed today, so would tomorrow do?"

"Dorsey?" he inquired. "Attorney?"

"Yes an' one o' the vurry best. He ain't ever lost a case in his life," she assured him.

"That will be soon enough," he assented. Maisie tapped a scarlet sandal to fox-trot time and the blasé one was a devotee. He tapped a patent leather oxford and grinned. "I notice you dance."

"I shake a wicked hoof," she remarked coldly. "Dancin' is one thing I ain't ever had to take lessons for. If I c'd spell like I can hoof it, I'd be teachin' in the public school."

"D'ever step down to the Cinderella Roof?" he inquired. But Maisie had the barbed-wire gate closed. Would she let this young sheik find out that George Dorsey had but a single office with a partition to make two rooms of it, that she had no more chance to rent that suite of offices than she had to be general in the army?

"My chappyrone's in Europe right now," she told him. "An' they never let me out nights unassorted. Laugh that off!" She fled toward the hall. "When I come back you c'n discust it further. If I see you tomorrow!"

Down in the elevator, and out on the street. "When I come back!" Well, why not, the thought struck her. The rent was two-fifty—it came easy now—for six offices besides the lobby. One office for George; the five empty ones might be rented—there might be five young lawyers in Los Angeles who might want offices in the exclusive Mackinaw Building but were not able to afford a suite. If there were, how to find them? When lawyers wanted offices what did they do? They advertised. But where? The an-

swer; ask a lawyer. Better still, ask two lawyers. Into a telephone booth. Starting at the A's in the telephone book. Being after five, she had to call eleven lawyers before she found two in. Their answers were identical. Law offices wanted or for rent were advertised in the *Legal Record!*

One more telephone call. And an ad in the *Legal Record.* Then she supped contentedly at a lunch counter. It was a good day's work.

There was no day's work after that which wasn't. Maisie became the temporary owner of the most outlandish collection of oddities the world could hold—much funnier than Noah's Ark. "I've got Noah backed off the boards," she giggled. It was a good thing George had the mumps. It kept him from having apoplexy, which he would have had if he had seen the office!

Thirty lawyers, young and otherwise, answered Maisie's ad in the *Legal Record.* From that number she chose five; four of them recent graduates of the university who had private incomes to warrant offices while they awaited clients; sons of wealthy families. The fifth was an elderly man well versed in law and practice, semi-retired but desiring a place to retire the rest of the way. Each of these five men had offices of his own somewhere else now, paying stenographer's salaries also; and each of them would be glad to get into the exclusive Mackinaw Building for the prestige of the name, at the same or less expense than that to which they were accustomed.

"With stenographic service furnished, that's terrible cheap," Maisie assured each and every one of them. "I'll have a girl just to do your work and I'll take charge. I'll be practicin' law pretty soon myself," she added modestly. "But a hundred dollars apiece for what you're gettin' is like findin' it."

"There's one catch in it," she moaned to herself. "I can't collect any rent from 'em until they move in, an' I can't move 'em in until I've paid the rent an' got a girl for them——"

That day George was able to telephone his office himself; to Maisie's assurance that everything was goin' fine he seemed satisfied. But when she mentioned offices he reverted to his old self.

"I'll attend to that matter, Miss Snclair," he said severely. "I may take desk space in some other lawyer's office for a while, and not keep an office of my own." That hit Maisie between the eyes. "I'll be out in a few days—" he added.

Desk space—and no Maisie? Not if she knew it. She closed the office and tore over to Main Street, into an establishment with three golden balls hanging above the door, and a moment later out again, sad but jubilant. Back to the Mackinaw Building. "Lucky for you this is summer vacation time," said the real agent, not the slick-haired assistant this time. "Or this office would have been snapped up."

"Well Mr. Dorsey has just gone on his," she lied again. "That's why I wasn't back sooner. An' until

he writes me a check I can't pay what the office costs, but I can pay a fifty dollar deposit—I c'd move in—an' he'll mail me the money—" she thought fast.

"By the month or by the year," the agent hesitated.

"The year, o' course. Dear snakes," she said grandly. "Why Mister Dorsey is so rushed that he wouldn't think o' movin' again even in a year. We got five other lawyers assistin' him—" she boasted. "We got more than a mere office to move."

"Oh the deposit will be all right," he replied, impressed. "Will you sign the lease or wait for Mr. Dorsey's return?"

"Oh, I'll sign it—" she gasped. "He leaves all the important things to me. I'm the head an' shoulders of his business, y'understand."

M. St. Clair, she signed firmly on the dotted line of the lease, took her receipt for fifty dollars, looked at her watch—and it wasn't there. She sighed. Oh well, she'd get it back as soon as she collected the office rent from these five sub-tenants. Now to clear away the rest of the Swaps.

One day busier than the rest; telephone calls to the other tenants took some time. Would they move in on Saturday afternoon? They would, one and all. Maisie ordered the telephones moved to the new office and nearly fainted when they came on Friday to do it. Usually one had to wait a month. Perhaps the amber eyes had had something to do with it. The

young man who took her telephone order liked amber eyes and scarlet sandals; he also had spoken of the Cinderella Roof.

She took stock now, what had to be got rid of and what was to be sent over to the new offices. She must remember to drop in at the sign painter's that evening, two errands there. This moving was fun. Wouldn't George be excited and pleased? Then she studied her Swaps. They must all be gone Saturday.

Saturday morning George tried to call his office. But because the telephone was in the Mackinaw Building and no one was there, he got no answer. He thought he might drop in for a while, though he had not intended coming down before Monday.

When he saw the door of his office his state of mind started to wabble. The door was decorated by a large pasteboard, its edges fastened to the glass by stickers; in crooked and heavily leaning letters this board announced that this was the lair of M. ST. CLAIR, SWAPS.

Swaps! Swaps! What on earth? He unlocked the door and saw—everything on earth.

What was this about? He sank into a chair and looked. Articles of feminine clothing lay in heaps on kitchen chairs; kitchen utensils dwelt amicably with automobile tires; carpenters' tools were embraced by a Paisley shawl. Mute evidence of her perfidy around him, but Maisie was gone. Gone now, and gone forever! No favor on earth could square a trick like this, he knew. Because he was ill, unable to be at the office,

she had dragged into it the discards of the world, made it a den of—of Swappers! Monday—for she was evidently gone for the day—he would clear out this office, and clear Maisie out too. He was through. And the mumps had hurt and his feelings hurt now. He was sick of it all. Staggering a little he left, which was lucky for Maisie, for George and for everyone else. For resplendent in a new marcel wave she appeared right after he had gone.

In a new creation which she had exchanged for some phonograph records, a gown which was a web of silver and heliotrope, she came dashing in almost on the echoes of George's weak footsteps. And then busy minutes of the past became as idle and stagnant. At one o'clock her clients were due to arrive to get the things they desired for the things they did not desire, so ardently. From one until three-thirty she howled joyfully, checking off her lists.

"Yes, Miss Stark. I got the beaver collared coat you wanted for them carpenter's tools. Right here, Mr. Brown. Two darn good tires for that old set of harness. I hope you fit them three dresses, Miss Horning, I picked 'em myself an' I got the best outta a lot of coupla hundred. Yes, Mis' Taylor, I got rid o' your old icebox, here's your vanity box, all fitted up nice!" Men, women, boys and girls came, received the thing they had hoped for, sometimes not so good but sometimes surprisingly better than they had expected, but what they wanted; and they were rid of a thing they had not wanted.

"Mr. Midge, I hope you have a swell trip in that flivver," she said to another customer. "It rode good. I went round the block in it."

"Well I'm the bird that can make it go." grinned the man. "Miss Sinclair, you don't know how I appreciate your getting it for me for that old shoeshine stand."

"Well, properly speakin', I didn't," she grinned in return. "I traded the shoeshine stand to a fellow for a little fruit stand; and then traded the fruit stand for a little neighborhood grocery booth; and I traded the grocery store—with a little added to it by me, for this here flivver. It took time, but it was worth it."

"Well, I'd been tryin' to get rid of that stand—how did you happen to ask me about it?"

"Oh, the Greek that had the fruit stand said he wanted a shine stand an' you was the first shine I saw afterwards—" she laughed. "Well g'bye. Ain't this the gay life?"

By four o'clock the office was empty. All ordered articles had been called for. At four fifteen the expressman came to move George's offices. At four-thirty Maisie was headed for the Mackinaw Building, to supervise the installation of the shining office furniture she had got out of the Swap Business. And by five the other five tenants had moved in also. She could hardly wait until Monday, when George had said he would be down.

Neither could George. Monday bright and early he made his way downtown, feeling better, girded for

the fray. It wasn't nine o'clock yet, and the halls were still dingy. He took out his key and flung back the door, then stood aghast!

An empty room confronted him. No chair, no desks, no stick of furniture; he strode to the door of his private cubicle. It was empty! Weakly he leaned against the wall. What did it mean? Maisie St. Clair —and how he hated that name and the tight-rope walker father it implied—had done some wild things, as against some wonderfully fine, loyal things; she had broken every rule man could make for the business-like running of an office, but until this moment no thought as to her honesty had ever come into George's mind. Her very honesty was so intrinsically a part of her that one left it out in thinking of her.

His office, however, had vanished. Naturally, it must be stolen. He had no office at all. The files of his few precious clients—where were his files? Gone. Echo answered, gone.

He must report it to the police, he supposed. Some office building thief had cleaned out her disgusting swap business, and had taken George's things too, that is, unless she was at the bottom of this. Perhaps she would come in after a while as astonished as he. It was early. He would wait a while. So George Dorsey, Attorney-at-Law, sat down on the floor to wait and see if his office or his nemesis returned, either of them. And after half an hour he got up stiffly to start for the police station.

From force of habit he reached to turn off the light. It had not been on, but punching it now, it flooded the dim room with brilliance. And in its sudden radiance before his door he saw the thing—a cloth banner, done in gay red and black letters a foot high, a banner fifteen feet long, or longer, stretched along the hall wall opposite his door. The sort of thing that is hung across the streets—(only this was smaller) for political use. Dumfounded, he read

GEORGE DORSEY—ATTORNEY-AT-LAW—
HAS REMOVED HIS OFFICES!
HE IS AT SUITE 900-1-2-3-4-5-6 MACKINAW
BUILDING

It had been hard for Maisie to stop there. Her early circus training inclined her to add something snappy, about the price of admission or the ballyhoo for George, but the printer had thought it wouldn't do. So this was the result.

After much cogitation Maisie had felt that the sign would be such a lovely surprise for George, so she let him go to the office without warning, to make it complete. Then he would come to the new one! Just like a pardon from the pen for him. He wouldn't even have to hunt desk space! As he went down the stairs, above the building entrance on the inside was the mate to the upstairs hall banner. Rage seized him then, and he tore down the banner and ground it under his heel, stamping out into Broadway. Mack-

inaw Building indeed! Why, he must be at home, delirious. The Mackinaw Building was one of the finest and most expensive office buildings on Broadway. The rents ran into fabulous sums. He must be going crazy. Or Maisie had gone!

He was not too crazy to recognize the Mackinaw Building entrance when he saw it, however, or to say "Nine" to the elevator operator, or to tiptoe when he got out of the cage. He stopped before a resplendent door with the magic words "George Dorsey, Attorney-at-Law" on its shining patterned glass. But something was awfully wrong. It just wasn't possible. The silly look of the figures on the sign in the old building came back into his mind's eye "Suite 900-1-2-3-4-5-6."

She had wanted the world to know that George Dorsey had six full rooms and a lobby. But to George there was only one door, and he feared to open it. At last he touched the knob—the mystery must be solved. It opened noiselessly. He peeped through the slit and found the huge lobby untenanted. He opened it further and peeped some more.

On the floor was a tasteful carpet of gray (obtained in exchange for a victrola, had he but known it). At the far end of the room stood two matching typewriter desks, side by side. (One of them had been swapped for a lawnmower, a wheelbarrow and three sets of dishes; the other for credit at a grocery store.) A brand new machine was on one desk, (bought on time by Maisie) and the fruit of her

first trading graced the other. Along one side was a neat settee (a baby carriage had been the price of that). Six shining doors opened from this room. Each bore a name in neat black letters: Mr. Gill; Mr. Anderson; Mr. Abbott; Mr. Wing; Mr. Norris; Mr. Dorsey. George shivered. What else?

Should he, or should he not, go in? At last he sidled through. The lobby was still empty. That was because the new stenographer was not supposed to begin work until Tuesday. The other tenants were celebrating their move in groups, or singly.

He noticed the neat, substantial chairs which dotted the lobby. And one long wall was covered with sectional book cases, where a valuable nucleus to a law library was in sight. Maisie had promised to store it for a retired lawyer. And maybe George could buy it.

A door opened suddenly, the one marked Mr. Wing; and George sat down suddenly on a chair near the door which said Mr. Gill, acting like he was waiting for this Gill person. After one glance the elderly man who had come out of the Wing office went on and knocked on the door which said Mr. Dorsey. It was the sixth door. The best, corner office.

A voice said "C'm in."

George knew that voice.

The elderly man thought he closed the door, but he didn't.

So, Miss Snclair was responsible for this after all. That crazy girl, what expense had she let him in for,

him with almost no practice? Perhaps that elderly man owned this suite and Maisie had sublet that one office from him, but George couldn't even afford that. Then his name caught his ear.

"Of course there's such a person as Mr. Dorsey," Maisie was crying. "Whadda you think I'm tryin' to hand you?"

"Well, my dear, now remember I'm an old man, and I admire you immensely for the way you've handled this thing, but it seems that any man capable of practicing law would superintend a move like this himself and not just order a secretary, over the telephone, to take care of it."

"Well I'll tell you, if you'll swear on the bible not to give me away," Maisie laughed gleefully. "You're a regular feller, an' you're old enough not to josh George about it. It's this way. George is a smart enough bird an' he's got a good head but there's one thing holds him back. He ain't got any confidence in himself—or in me or anybody else. He's always figurin' that everything's gonna fall flat.

"Now between you and I—" she went on, "George's got brains but he won't never get no chance to use 'em, tucked away up in the north end of the business district with his office lost between a massage parlor and a carbon-paper joint. There was other lawyers in that building, but they had the front rooms and a front of sev'ral other kinds. George was hid back in a dark corner an' you know they ain't never found that light houses is any good

built back in a hollow. Ain't that a wrong connection?"

"Young lady, I fear you have—well, the advertising mind. At any rate, I'm lost in admiration. Go on."

George's ears burned furiously now, but he was waiting for the rest. But how dared she discuss him?

"So when that building got the razz," Maisie continued, "I decided that George had got to have a front window of his own,—kinda dress up the window after a manner of speakin' and let the cockeyed world know what kinda goods they got for sale inside. That's all. I got a glim on this place—and I took it."

"You really mean—" gasped the elderly gentleman, "that your employer, a young attorney just starting, doesn't know you have taken these offices?"

"You got the meat of it right off the ice," replied Maisie crisply. "You see, none o' you birds woulda come here and made the grade for such a suite by yourselfs, an' you're darn glad to get in this way with a office with a swell front an' all, an' I can furnish it to you an' well—well, a good time will be had by all."

"Aren't you afraid of what he'll say—about the expense—when he gets back from his vacation?"

George gnashed his teeth then.

"Expense my grandmother's mittens," laughed Maisie. "Y'know, I gotta bargain in this joint, and after you birds pay me your rent this office ain't

costin' me nothin'. Besides George won't have nothin' to say about it. I'm the fancy little bird that signed the lease. You rent from me. As to vacation—listen —George ain't takin' nothin' like that. He's been home with the mumps!"

"Well that is good—and I have to hand it to you," her audience chuckled.

"That ain't the half of the joke," Maisie went on. "Outta that swap business I started I got all the new furniture for this office and the recepshun lobby. An' I started with nothin' but a saxophone an' about twenty hard iron men; my watch went in hock an' I darn near got arrested for runnin' a second hand store without a license, but I kidded 'em out of it, an' I come out ahead. I got every bit of this furniture free and clear outta the mess, and we get this office free, and I pay the stenog out of it, an' we—well I made me a little to boot. All George is gonna be out at all is my salary—as always——"

George had heard enough. He slipped quietly toward the door and crept out and down one flight of stairs, to think!

That amazing young lunatic had moved his offices from a cheap dingy room in an old building to one of the finest in the city; had sublet to advantage all the other offices, and he was to have no expense at all; had done her "swapping" so that she had furnished these offices—his head rocked with it all.

He had come downtown with the express intention of freeing himself once and for all of this slangy,

spectacular, cheerfully ignorant hoyden who had so brazenly betrayed him by starting a free-for-all junk shop in his office; and now!

It hadn't been his office. She had seen a glimmering vision and followed it unafraid; she had risked her precious wrist watch to help him; even her mistakes had all been made trying to be helpful. He groaned. How was he to stand it? How could he bear her flyaway hair with its gaudy combs set with glass, her sleeveless dresses, gay and cheap? Her scarlet sandals and her habit of dancing even while she sat still; her insouciant grin and her bland disregard for the King's English—and the terrible fear of what she might do next? How could he?

He started back to the ninth floor, still thinking. He heard voices. One oily, the other flippant.

"Thanks, a lot," Miss Snclair was howling cheerfully from within. "It's terrible sweet of you but I ain't got no time to fling a wicked heel this week anywheres. My boss'll be back from his vacation trip to Honolulu an' I'll have to be goin' over the dozens of new cases that's crowded in sence he went away. If you find a busier dame than I am, you gotta travel."

The door slammed. A blasé youth—from the office of the building if George had but known—took the elevator.

George squared his shoulders and took a deep breath. He was going on in, to be *surprised*—and *pleased.*

V

MAISIE AT THE BAR

WHEN Maisie remarked, answering the buzzer from George's office this hot morning "It isn't the heat, it's the humidity that gets you down—'sawful for October, ain't it?" he wanted to strangle her even more than usual. The way he felt about her today was that he would admire to stand outside her cage and say "Oh, see all the lovely rattles she has!" That's it exactly. He didn't know why he hated her more this morning. He just did. Maybe it was the Chinese influence dress she had on, with storks flying upside down around the hem, or maybe it was the fact that she used her buffer in the public outer office. Or maybe it was that he envied the sub-tenants of the suite who had the services of the neat and seemingly efficient second stenographer, while he was favored with Maisie's personal services. Whatever it was, he glowered.

"I'm in court this morning, Miss Snclair—" he snorted. "Will you bring in the Kennedy files for me to see?"

"Kennedy?" Maisie yelled. Yes, yelled. Anything more than a whisper was like unto a yell with her. It was the way her throat was made. "My grief, I'd

completely forgot about that case. Howling caterpillars!" she clapped a hand to her jaw, screwed up her face and held her breath.

"Why—what—Miss Snclair—what is it?" he asked.

"Insulated tooth," replied his secretary after a moment, her words showing better than her notes, perhaps, why her work often came out so queerly in the typing. A tightrope walker's child doesn't get much schooling—that is, if she stays near the rope.

George wanted to sympathize; that is, a very little he wanted to. Any sympathetic nature would want to, but the diabolic side of him rejoiced. If she had a toothache she might go home, and he could ask the fleet-fingered person out there to do his work; and there was a particularly long and technical complaint to be dictated this afternoon after he came back from court.

"Perhaps you'd better go home," he said almost too cordially.

"Go home!" roared Maisie. "Well not that you could notice it. Say, if a jumping tooth laid me low I'd a been under the daisies long since this! Mr. Dorsey, the only thing that could keep me locked in what I call a home would be locomotive taximeter, and I ain't sure that'd do it. I guess a lily in my hand is the only thing that'll quill my enthusiasm. All I need is a little hootch—I reckon you ain't got a thimble-

full around have you? Hootch, I said. Three drops and let it lie in the hole for a minute—An' I really think from what I hear that two drops o' the kind you get now would pull the darn thing out, hook, line and sinker."

George assured her that he had no "hootch."

"I mighta known," she said smugly. "You look the part. The lips that—" she giggled. "Well ether will do it. But it's gone now anyway. It just hits me in the clinches you might say. Go ahead. Was you wanting to dictate something?"

"No. I wanted the Kennedy file. And if a Mrs. Brown telephones, ask her to come in at three this afternoon."

"Brown? Brown? When did we get a Brown? Is that a new one? Ain't that grand!"

"Yes, it is a new case," George admitted coldly, but with pardonable pride. There was no denying that the new offices had brought a goodly amount of business with them. Three clients this week had come "just looking for a lawyer—" and had found him.

"Y'gotta admit business is rushin' like a bargain sale sence we moved," she grinned.

"That's all, Miss Snclair," said George. Darn her, rubbing it in. He knew moving had helped, but why did she have to press the sore spot?

A few minutes later George passed through the office, brief case in hand. "I shall not return before noon, Miss Snclair," he said. "If we do not get

to trial I shall only telephone at the lunch hour."

"Well, lotta luck," she caroled. "Don't let 'em get you down."

The worst of it was that at that moment two of the five subletters came out of their offices and greeted Miss Snclair. It made him look like an office boy. He slammed the hall door.

Maisie was turning brightly to repartee with the two young subletters when shrieks rent the air, tore the quiet of half past nine of the morning.

"Sufferin' snakes," she whooped, speeding for the door. "I hope it ain't a murder but if it is I hope George gets the defense!"

It wasn't a murder, but it would have been hard to convince an ear-witness that it wasn't. They—all the shrieks—came from the elevator shaft where, on each of the twelve floors of the building, crowds congregated within the moment. Those on the twelfth, eleventh, tenth, ninth, eighth and seventh floors saw nothing. From the sixth and fifth little could be seen, but from the fourth and third there was a lovely view.

The mechanism of the car failing, the emergency apparatus had stopped the car and, it seemed, had stopped it for good. Halfway between the third and fourth floors, there was the elevator with a full quota of passengers.

Maisie slid down the five flights from ninth to fourth to see it.

There was George. She was quite near him, too

near, he thought, peering through the bars at him, watching the efforts of the operator to move the car.

"Maybe if you'd give a good jump it might jar loose and go down—" she offered eagerly, bringing another shriek from the now almost quiet women inside.

"You let the operator take care of this, Miss Snclair," said George.

Engineers came charging up the stairs and crawled out from the fourth floor upon the grilled roof of the lift, and swung out on the cable below, from the third. After a moment they reported: "Have to get at the mechanism in the sub-basement. Better get a ladder and let the passengers out on the third floor down it."

That however, was a vain hope. The doors, along with the other trouble, had jammed. It looked like an hour's work to release the prisoners. "No danger, just delay," came the verdict. And George, looking at his watch, saw that it was a quarter to ten. And he was to try a case.

"Miss Snclair—" he said from between the bars. "You go to the Hall of Justice, please, Justice Court Number Seven. Case of Mullica vs. the Street Railway Corporation. When that case is called, report that I've been delayed and why. Hurry, now, Mullica vs. Street Railways."

"Mullica? That the Italian fish peddler?" warbled Maisie for all the world to hear. "I darn near forgot

we had that case, too. Been set for trial so long. Mullica—Mullica—hope I don't forget his name——"

"Here—wait!" George called. "Here's my brief case with the name on the papers." He slid the case between the bars of the elevator high above Maisie's head on the third landing, and it dropped to the floor with a plop. Maisie seized the bag and headed for the stair.

"Postpone till this afternoon—or whenever they will—" George cried after her.

Maisie ran for a street car. The Mackinaw Building was farther from the Court house than their other office had been, but it didn't matter much; George wasn't in court often enough to count—yet.

She found the proper department and slipped into the back row of seats just as the clerk was reading the calendar. At once in the front row she spied their client, Angelo Mullica. Angelo was Italian, and he did, indeed, peddle fish. He was a mild, but worried person, his attorney not being in sight. As he looked anxiously, Maisie slipped up and sat down beside him.

"Mr. Dorsey ain't here," she said brightly, under her breath.

That being no news to Mr. Mullica he merely looked at her.

"He's stuck, caged," she explained. Then seeing the blank look on Angelo's face she elaborated:

"Elevator—stop—broke—bust—no go—" that being her idea of broken Italian.

"No elevator—fish wagon!" Mullica insisted.

Then the clerk droned: "Mullica versus Street Railways, Incorporated."

"Me—that me—" cried Mullica.

"Ready for the defendant," came another voice.

"Plaintiff not ready?" the justice inquired vaguely.

"They don't seem to be in court," replied the other attorney promptly. "I move for judgment for the defendant."

"Oh you do, do you?" cried Maisie, springing up. "Whadda you mean they ain't in court? I guess because you don't see Mr. Dorsey anywhere you think nobody's here. Well I am! Laugh that off. But it ain't very convenient to try this case for a while. Suppose you go ahead and try some others, Judge, and we'll sit and listen an' after while we'll try this one."

She smiled her bright, engaging smile, almost paralyzing the judge. What sort of vaudeville show did this promise to be? Who was this amiable humming bird who sang even as she talked and whose scarlet sandals seemed to be dancing even while she stood in them and who blandly talked about trying a case?

"I gotta no lawyer—" cried Mullica.

"Dorsey, attorney for the plaintiff, not present?" asked the judge.

"That's what I'm tryin' to get over," Maisie agreed with him.

"Why not?" asked a startled judge.

"Why? How far is down?" Maisie grinned. "And that's the reason," she added.

The judge frowned and blinked. This was getting out of hand. That was no respect for the court. "Answer the court's question," he thundered. She quailed not at all.

"Ain't I?" she grinned. "You don't need to get mad about it. I didn't have nothing to do with it and neither did George. He wasn't running the elevator. But he ain't up nor down, just sort of in suspense, after a manner of speakin', an' if you want to know which horse I'm backin', my money goes that he's cussin' a blue streak by now. With the elevator full——"

"Is there elevator trouble in this building?" demanded the judge of his clerk.

"Not here, the Mackinaw Building," Maisie explained. "That's why Mr. Dorsey sent me."

"Oh, you're from Dorsey's office." The judge began to see.

"I'll tell a fainting world I am and from nowhere else but—" she laughed. "Ain't you ever heard o' me? I'm Miss Snclair—the county clerk's office calls me 'Nunc!' Ain't you never heard of Mr. MacDonald——"

The judge, however, interrupted her. "Am I to understand—" and the defense attorney interrupted

him: "Your honor, are we to proceed to trial? It's expensive and troublesome for a railway company to bring men in off their runs to testify in court; an insignificant case like this one, in justice court, costs us more than it is worth."

"Then whyn't you pay the poor fella the dammige you did his fish wagon and his leg and not waste my time an' yours? And the witnesses?" Maisie demanded.

By this time three reporters, notified by grapevine wireless that something funny was on in this department, slipped into the back row of spectators' seats, not unnoticed by the judge. His mouth twitched the merest trifle at that. In the prosaic routine of small suits for collections, anything under three hundred dollars, it wasn't often that this justice saw his name in print, and he was hoping for reëlection as a matter of course. Also this was an amusing diversion.

The defense attorney purpled and snorted at this, but versed in court procedure did not reply. Maisie, however, was not held back by any such inhibitions. Did he think he was too good to talk to her?

"I guess if you was a poor fish peddler and got your wagon busted an' your leg scraped black and blue you'd lose some o' your dignity," she scowled.

The reporters scribbled and grinned; the judge bit his lip. Then he rapped for order.

"Perhaps we had better proceed, if you are to represent Dorsey," he said.

"Well go ahead, nobody's stoppin' you," Maisie answered. Her idea was that George might get here before the other side got through telling the judge their side of it, and then he could tell his. "Do your stuff," she called loftily to the other lawyer.

"You are appearing for the plaintiff," said the judge. Now, that was a new idea. She hadn't thought of that. It hit her amidships and rocked her for a moment, but she righted and came up bravely, swallowing salt-water but still game. Why not? She didn't seem to be very successful in getting the case postponed—they were pretty dumb about that, maybe she would do better going ahead with it and not waiting for George. She didn't know the signals very well but if they wanted to try the blamed case, why not let 'em? One more favor she could do George!

"Oh, I'll be glad to help you out," she said to the courtroom in general. "I ain't a reg'lar lawyer but I got quite a lot of experience. And I wouldn't be s'prised if I prob'ly have as much right to do it as some that calls theirselves attorneys—" she sniffed her scorn of the opposing counsel who crimsoned.

"We'll leave out the personalities," said the judge sternly. "You don't have to be admitted to try a case in justice court, you know."

"Oh, then he ain't a regular lawyer?" she asked blandly and the attorney crimsomed two shades deeper.

"Proceed—" said the judge a bit wildly. What was this to be?

"Hop to it," she settled back in her chair. That fat bird who thought he'd win the case because George wasn't here, would find out he was out on a limb. "Anything to keep him from havin' a stroke. I guess I can make him as sick as George can. I been told I knew more law than some lawyers. Tear into it, boy, let's see what makes the wheels go round."

The judge, whose tongue was cleaving unto his palate, passed a kerchief across his brow and pounded with the gavel again.

"That wasn't a bad gag, was it—'what makes the wheels go round'—considerin' it was the way they went round that busted his fish wagon—" she said in a loud aside to the clerk of the court, who choked.

The poor judge by this time had decided to ignore this person. So he read the complaint for a minute and then said: "Proceed."

That nonplussed the cheerful Maisie.

"Whadda I do?" she asked, ingratiatingly. "I'll get the hang of this after a minute."

"Call the plaintiff to the stand," prompted the judge.

"Plaintiff!" called Maisie. "Here you, Mullica, get up in that chair and spill your story."

Mullica labored over and sat down, but was stricken dumb.

"Well, go ahead," howled Maisie.

"Yes sir," said Mullica, nothing more.

"What's eating you, stage fright?" his amateur counsel asked. "You tell the judge how the street

car smashed your fish wagon, and how much it cost to get it fixed, and that it wasn't your fault, and that it was theirs, and how bad your leg was hurt and how much money you want." Breathless, she stopped, triumphant. That was a day's work well done. "Yessir, you tell 'em."

The opposing counsel was on his feet. Behind his courtroom manner a suggestion of a twinkle had appeared.

"Your honor," he said sadly, "it will doubtless be impossible—I mean physically—for me to rise to object at every point that I might wish. As I see it, it will be sufficient undertaking for me to endeavor to be heard at all. I might say just now that I shall not pretend to make an objection every time the attorney for plaintiff leads the witness; *but* I do object, and loudly—when she pushes him!" He mopped his brow and sat down. An understanding look passed between him and the justice.

"Objection sustained!" said the judge.

"What does that mean?" demanded Maisie. "It don't seem fair if I don't get all the signals."

The judge explained, politely, that she was permitted to bring out the facts of the case by testimony only, not to put words or facts into the plaintiff's mouth.

"All right then, you ask him. You know what you want to know," she said.

And the judge did just that. Maisie listened

avidly. That was a good way to find out how to do it all. Next time she would know how.

There was no cross-examination. The judge dismissed Mullica and asked for her other witnesses. Maisie asked Mullica who they were. He was dumb. At least he acted dumb.

"No sir, lady," he said. "Nobody. Jus' me." He smiled sweetly. "Me and moto'man there—" he pointed to the company's employee. "We smash by ou'selv."

"Holy smoke!" howled Maisie. "Wasn't there nobody around to see?"

"Me," said Mullica, with great finality and firmness.

"Can you tie that?" Maisie asked the judge. "Well, I'll ask the motorman. He'll know as much as anybody, being as it was him that did it."

"The motorman is a defense witness," the judge interposed.

"Oh that's all right. I can ask him when they get him up there. Save time," she explained. "When it's their turn—an' I guess that's now!" She smiled rather ruefully. "Beats all, expectin' me to cook up a dammige case out o' one potato—or one piece o' fish! But anyway Mr. Mullica's told you all about it an' as he was the party he ought to know. Nobody else could tell you how his leg hurt."

"I call William Jones," said the other attorney. The judge listened to William. So did Maisie. He

was the motorman. J. Roberts was the conductor. Henry Brown and Joseph Givens said they were conductors who were riding home at the time of the collision; on their way home from work. All told the same story—that the motorman sounded his bell and was going slowly; that Mullica turned midway of the block, driving across the track without warning; that Mullica was reading a newspaper while he was driving, driving with one hand. That was their story.

Mullica sputtered in Maisie's ear. There had been no passengers at all on that car. It was late afternoon; the car was on its way to the Forty-eighth street barns; no one was riding on it. They lied, those men.

"What do you want to lie for?" Maisie shrilled and the judge rapped on his desk as the other attorney sprang to his feet.

"Here—here—," called the judge, severely.

"Well Mr. Mullica says nobody was on that car—" Maisie trembled with the injustice of it.

She was rummaging in her brief case, hunting blank paper; in the file of this case she found another document. It was a carefully prepared affidavit George had provided himself for this trial in lieu of witnesses; an expert opinion as to rates of speed, and the like. Maisie frowned at it; was it to show to the judge, or what?

"Do you want to cross-examine?" asked the judge faintly.

"Yes, and I want to know those men's names and addresses and I'll ask their wives when they got home that night and all about it," she threatened. She looked at the queer document again and shoved it over to Mullica.

"What am I supposed to do with this?" she asked, worriedly. Mullica looked at it puzzled. "I—what that paper?" he asked. "I no read——"

A sudden light hit Maisie, dazzling her. "Can't you read at all?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"Your Honor!" howled Maisie. "I want to ask a lot of questions, you bet your sweet life."

"Go ahead," said His Honor.

"Did you say this bird was lookin' at a newspaper?" she demanded of the witness. "I mean when he was drivin'?"

"He was," said the uniformed one.

"Maybe he just picked up a funny picture—" she wheedled.

"He was reading. It was the printed part of the paper," he said firmly.

"You could see pretty well, couldn't you?" she jeered.

"I looked at it after the accident," he said promptly. "The paper he had in his hands when he got—in—the car's way—" he stumbled.

"What part was it?" she insisted.

"It was—a news front page," he swore.

"Doggone careless of him, now wasn't it?" she

remarked absently. "Now your honor, I gotta question to ask those other three fellows. I forget their names an' we ain't been introduced. Is it proper for me to ask 'em now?"

"You may still cross-examine, if you desire."

"I desire—" she grinned. "Call that motorman back." She was beginning to feel like a seasoned lawyer.

The same questions with practically the same answers followed. All declared under cross-examintion that Mullica was reading a newspaper when he drove across the track.

"Got it learned by heart, haven't you?" she howled and even as the attorney for the defense objected, a diversion occurred. Maisie clapped her hand to her face and howled. Judge, lawyer and witnesses stared. After a moment she spoke again: "That blame' tooth! It always hits me when I'm down. If I c'd get hold of a little ether—" then she grinned impudently at the justice.—"I'd probably give it to this bunch of cheerful liars——"

"Here—that won't do!" The judge shouted this time. "I'll have to fine you for contempt if you speak like that, and I hate to do it. But confine yourself to the facts of the case."

"Well ain't it a fact that they are lyin'?" she asked innocently. "Mullica here says that nobody was on that car but the motorman, not even a conductor. An' here three of 'em pop up and say they was ridin' in the front seat. That lawyer's a darn fine magician,

he oughta be on the Orpheum with his act. Right now it wouldn't s'prise me to see him drag the street car outta his hat——"

The judge moaned. A fine would not impress this young thing in the sky-blue dress with storks flying around its hem, and with scarlet dancing sandals. This whole trial was a farce. His dignity had to be preserved somehow, but he was stifling a wish that some brother justice might have been there to see the fun.

"Have you finished?" he asked severely.

"I'm through askin' them questions," she said. "But I wish you'd let me ask Mulligan one more thing."

The judge hesitated; but there was her right to rebuttal.

"Recall him, if the defense is through," he said at last.

"Oh yes, we're all through," muttered the other lawyer. Of course he had won this case. That ignorant girl—Dorsey must be a fool himself to employ her!—had won the case for him, accusing his star witness of perjury—his witnesses had all told straight stories and there were three of them.

"Hey, Mulligan, you go sit up there again," Maisie called. "There's something else you gotta tell the judge."

"Mullica—not Mulligan," said the defense attorney audibly.

"Well all right, Mullica then," she laughed. "He's

just the same guy no matter what you call him. He still sells fish."

She laughed gaily and the judge joined in slightly. The defense attorney tore his hair in burlesque and the bailiff tried to crawl under the desk to howl. A vaudeville bill, and no doubt about it.

"Now," Maisie did a little tap with a scarlet sandal, posing like a bantam weight at the sound of the gong. "Just you read this paper to the judge there, Mr. Mulligan—Mullica." She handed him the legal looking document with which George had intended to refresh his mind as he worded his cross-examination as to rates of speed.

Mullica looked bewildered and passed the paper back, politely. "You read," he said confidingly. "I not read him. Not read. Not write. Make him the mark like this." With an ingenuous finger he traced his X in the thin film of dust atop the rail about the bench. The judge reached for the document, the defense attorney sprang to his feet.

"That document has not been offered in evidence," he cried. "I demand to know its contents."

"Don't get excited," Maisie advised loudly. "Just keep your shirt on. I don't know what's in it either. I can read, but it doesn't spell anything in my young life."

Seeing that the judge as well as the other attorney had not caught her point, Maisie howled cheerfully—"Wait a minute—I gotta better one than that." Seizing a sheet of paper she printed in huge letters

for a moment and then walked toward Mullica again. Remembering, she turned toward the judge. "Has that fellow got to know what's on every paper I show to my guy?" she demanded.

"He has the right—eventually—" the judge began.

"Oh all right. Before breakfast's as good as after dinner. Here, take a look. You can read this, can't you, from there? And if a person should hand you this paper you'd be pretty sore, wouldn't you? I bet me a horse to a corkscrew you'd have your coat off and two blows hit before they could pull you off. How about it?" She grinned insolently.

The attorney had turned a rusty purple; he was up to two hundred and twelve degrees Fahrenheit, and Maisie knew it.

"Put on the icebag, nothing pers'nal intended—" she said delightedly. Then she turned again to her client. The judge could plainly see the paper as Mullica took it. "Hold this and look at it, Mullica," Maisie howled. "That's right. Now you tell the judge. Is what that paper says absolutely true?"

The judge got the point then. For in large letters on that white sheet was the short and sweet invitation to fight——

YOU'RE A LIAR!

Italian, Irish or what you will. The call to combat.

"Is that true?" insisted Maisie. Mullica smiled innocently and replied: "Yes ma'am."

"Well," said Maisie shaking her earrings, amber eyes agleam, "I guess maybe that newspaper he was reading when he drove across the tracks has blew away by now!" She strolled back to her chair. "Ain't that the alligator's feathers, judge? Why if he could read he'd a knocked me for a row of lemon trees. If that don't cancel that brother-act's bookin', I give up. Ain't there some rule that you fine acts that has rehearsed too well and gets musclebound as to the truth?"

There was a choking sound from the bench; a rustling in the back row where wide-eyed reporters sat. But from the rest of the room, no sound at all. George Dorsey burst into the room, breathless and weak. But at the sight before him he stopped, mouth agape, all a-tremble. For there was Maisie, sitting on the edge of the table allotted to attorneys, swinging a scarlet sandal, her eyes agleam with triumph; the judge was mopping his brow. The other attorney, very red as to neck, was stuttering explosively. Mullica was in the witness chair, bemused. What had this girl done now? Was she attempting to try a case? George felt a sudden kinship with all murderers.

"Your honor—" he spoke—"I'm the attorney for plaintiff in this case—Dorsey——"

Maisie whirled and spied him. "'sall right," she chirped. "I just got 'em up a tree and sawed off the limb. They lied like heroes. Said poor Mulligan was readin' a paper, and the poor nut don't know how!"

The judge came back as if from a period of unconsciousness. He found his voice.

"Your able assistant, Miss Sinclair," he said politely to George, "has just presented a very neat bit of evidence. There is question, now, as to the credibility of the witnesses——"

"If your honor please—" cried the defense attorney leaping to his feet. "This is a complete surprise to me. I am willing to make an affidavit that I have acted in good faith in this matter, but it seems that I have been misinformed by over-zealous employees, through a mistaken sense of loyalty to their company. I would like to ask a continuance for a short time, for negotiation with the plaintiff as to settlement——"

"I am willing to grant a recess," said the judge. "I imagine Mr. Dorsey would consider a settlement."

George gathered that this child of luck had once more been saved from shipwreck by an island coming up from the sea at the exact spot where one thought she had drowned. He nodded his head dumbly.

"I asked Miss Snclair—" he said, "to explain my tardiness——"

"She explained," said His Honor, gathering that Miss Sinclair had not been intended to try this case at all. "I must say, Mr. Dorsey, that you are fortunate in having a—er—pinch hitter like Miss Sinclair. And—er" he leaned back weakly. "Man to

man—it's too bad you missed it. I imagine the settlement will be—er——"

Then Maisie put her word in. "You got 'em licked to a standstill," she told George blandly. "I didn't do near as good as you would, o' course, but I did the best I could bein' sent into the box without no warming up. You go out in the hall now and talk to that guy. An' charge 'em plenty."

Tripping blithely toward the door she almost forgot her manners, but not quite. Turning she called back: "Oh, Judge, it was swell of you to help me out when I got the lines mixed up. I guess after I rehearse the act a little I c'd get by all right. I hope I practice a lot in your court. You're a good guy."

"Your Honor!" gasped George. "Please—she is—she is——"

"Yes, she certainly is!" agreed the judge. "Portia out-Portia-ed. Where did you get her?"

"I don't know—" moaned George. "But I do know what I'm going to do with her." He made to follow the other attorney for the desired conference.

"You should!" said His Honor, meaningly. "Heaven must have sent her to you, Dorsey. Cherish her. She's priceless. Next case!"

VI

WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK

THERE wasn't any reason for George to be so glum thought Maisie a morning or two later. Things were going lovely. There was a stream—a thin stream perhaps, but nevertheless a stream—of clients pouring into the offices. They didn't owe any money. All the cases came out right. What, then, was it? Prob'ly George didn't eat right. He looked like he had indigestion.

But it wasn't. It was heart failure. Superinduced by terrible words he had heard Maisie speak, only this morning. Early, before even the worms were out, he had stolen down to work to prepare a case without interruption, and when that young hoyden had been clearing her desk for work at nine o'clock, what had she said? Merely this, that George needed a wife! And that if he didn't know it, it was time somebody told him so and found him one. And she laughed!

Furthermore, considering that she had raised him by hand, she had gone on to say she felt it her duty to make this last sacrifice. And knowing her, he was capable of believing that she would do it! He wouldn't have put it past her to offer herself for the job,

either! Consider then, the sinking sensation in George's soul. One thing was clear. That had to be headed off. But how?

He might stop her by her desk and begin a campaign of criticism as to her clothes, her musical comedy clothes; her earrings; her unruly amber locks; her badly shopworn, not to say threadbare, English; and then he would casually mention his fiancée, perhaps enlarge upon this mythical person. That might work.

In accordance with that idea he strolled out and said sternly: "Miss Snclair, I wish you would refrain from discussing clients' affairs with them in the outer office; such as Mr. Carruthers. After all, he comes to talk over his business with me, not with you."

"Oh, don't apologize," Maisie replied pertly. "The pleasure is all mine! I only wish I c'd think of some way to keep him from talkin' about his troubles to me. He says I'm so sympathetic—an' that's one thing I ain't—for him. But thanks for offerin' to take him off my hands!"

This, when George thought it over, was not exactly what he had intended. But that was always the way. He felt that if he knocked Maisie flat she would have thanked him for trying to kill the fly on her forehead. And immediately after that speech, she reached up and flecked a speck of lint from his coat-sleeve! George fled, forgetting to mention the fiancée.

There were weapons he could use, such as her steam-whistle voice and her loud clothing—he would

start in again—and then his weapons blew up in his hand.

For at noon, with the idea of studying women for George's benefit, Maisie let herself be inveigled into a tea-shop, a thing which had never happened before. Women went there, even if Maisie never did. And if she was to find out what sort of woman he needed, she must look 'em over. Fortunate enough to spy a little side booth, she slipped in and ordered her lunch. A little wall, higher than her head, separated her from the next booth. And it was a full minute before her consciousness was penetrated by the conversation from the other side of the partition. It was much more than a minute before she recovered from the blow of what she heard, however. For one woman had said to another:

"Sometimes my fingers fairly itch to get hold of that girl and try to make something out of her that isn't a cross between a circus poster and a ten cent store window." And the other voice, low, controlled, said: "Yes, isn't it a pity? And she looks bright, too. I've heard some really remarkable things about her. Dorsey—the attorney she works for—his offices are on the ninth, aren't they?—has courage to let her dress that way. Do you know her name?"

"My dear! Do you mean to say you haven't heard that priceless story about the trial she conducted in Justice Court the other day, when she struck an attitude and said to Judge Blevins—'I'm Miss Sinclair, haven't you heard of me?' And I'm inclined

to wonder if Dorsey doesn't encourage her freakishness. Come right down to it, she's an attraction for a certain class of business."

"I wonder if he's clever enough to think of that?"

"I really feel sorry for the girl. Those terrible earrings—and the paint—down under it I think she has a lovely skin. And her eyes are marvelous."

"Typical chorus girl stuff—" they might have kept it up, but Maisie wouldn't have heard them. Thunder in her ears, lightning before her eyes. Her first impulse was to clean out the place, but the second was to sit still and be as small as possible. Then when her critics had left, she paid her check and walked out dazed. So, that is what those mouse-like women who worked in office buildings thought. She had often pitied them because they had no taste! Because they wore flat heels, and never a ribbon or a bead or an earring. And all this time they thought George was dressing her for a come-on, a barker outside the tent!

Straight to the gown department of the best shop on Broadway walked a crimson and ardent Maisie, asking for the manager. A frown on the face of a perfectly groomed woman, brought there by the sight of a glaring crimson-crépe dinner dress worn at noon, one which would make the footlights look dim, with a make-up which belonged with it, worn with an orange turban, changed into understanding when Maisie talked.

"I wanta know about clothes," she said frankly.

"I just found out what looks good in the movies ain't so good for the tired business man while he's gettin' tired. I just gotta earful that I'm booked for the wrong act, trying to play comedy when the scene's all set for little Eva's death. An' it ain't in the cards for a St. Clair to be anything but a topnotcher, whether it's walkin' a tightrope or slingin' law," she said. "I wanta look the part. An' the sky's the limit. Do me up right."

Salespeople began to fly about, in obedience to the manager's orders, and a docile Maisie listened as she looked.

It was nearly two o'clock when George stormed out into the lobby at the sound of her cheerful voice. This certainly was something upon which to hang a first class calling down. Two hours for lunch! And then—as has been said—the weapon he held blew up. The words died in his throat. For there by Maisie's desk stood the acme of perfection!

The trimmest and at the same time the smartest young person it had ever been his good fortune to see stood nonchalantly in the place where Maisie in filmy crêpe and scarlet sandals, had been wont to stand. From the dustless perfection of woodsy brown suede Oxfords peeped the clocked, silk-and-wool covered ankles; from the hem of the smart tailored model in sandy jersey to the dignified silver buckle which held a prim tailored bow of patent leather close to the crown of a Knox sailor, Maisie was a business girl from the magazine pages!

George could feel the zip of the wind blowing the Roman scarf about her slender throat, and he almost saw an ardent swain in a made-rite sweater adjusting her skates, on bended knee. George could hardly believe it was his good fortune to have this marvel in his office!

Nonchalantly she removed suede gauntlets and blew into them, dropped them carelessly in the upturned crown of the hat she had removed, then the Roman scarf, and laid them all in the desk drawer. Then she spoke.

"Was you wishing something, Mr. Dorsey?" and turned on the words. Save for the doorsill, George felt that he would have fallen prostrate from the shock. Gone was the crust of liquid white which had always adorned her countenance; gone the crimson patches from her cheeks; no black globules of mascara hung from the tips of her long lashes, and her lips were a color no science could perfect. From under a satiny, sleek, neatly shingled coiffure of purest gleaming amber, unadorned pink tips of her ears showed. And there were no earrings!

It came to George in that instant with something of a shock that all this time, beneath a rather crudely done copy, under daubed paint and riotous color, had lain the work of a master, unhonored and unsung. With the tinsel scraped off, Maisie was a beauty! And George, who had come to cavil, remained to pray.

He had said it all, by his stunned silence.

The opening of the outer door saved him from embarrassment.

George tore away his gaze and accompanied a client into his office.

"Kinda knocked him for a gool," Maisie chirped, her nonchalance disappearing. Underneath it, she was as excited as anybody.

"Well you have made quite a change," said Miss Kellogg, Maisie's assistant typist.

"Wasn't it about time?" Maisie demanded simply. And she hummed: "An' I learned about wimmin from 'er."

It was well that George had business, to give him time to recover from the shock. And when, a little later, she announced a waiting client, he had recovered his equanimity.

"Mr. Topuchias is waitin'?" she informed him grandly. "An' of all the circumstances in captivity, this takes the soft-rubber cornerstone. Mr. Topuchias got out without his momma an' let a twelve-minute egg sell him a exclusive right to holler 'ham-an-eggs-custard-pie' an' has him lay down the spot cash for it an' then Mr. Topuchias finds the tickets is for last week's show."

"Perhaps I'd better get the information from the client," George said, keeping a straight face with difficulty.

"Well, unless you been eatin' in a Greek rest'rant you'll have trouble understandin' it. But however it's your fun'ral. If you ask me, he don't need a lawyer,

he oughtta go see the district attorney and have the bird jugged for runnin' a lottery."

"I'll see the client—" said George stiffly.

It was Mr. Topuchias himself who invited Maisie into the conference. Like all his countrymen, Mr. Topuchias liked them blonde. And having told his troubles to this beautiful dream, why tell them again to this man who didn't look half so sympathetic as those amber eyes under their thick lashes? After all, it was to Miss St. Clair he had been sent by the traffic cop on the corner. Not to any lawyer. So, after all, it was Maisie who translated and turned the details over to her employer.

"It's the small matter o' Mr. Topuchias's money bein' gone that makes the boil about to break," she said. "Funny, isn't it? Whenever anybody says restaurant to a Greek he's just naturally paralyzed. Well, this bird sees this nice restaurant with the ice box all shiny an' the waiters in their white coats an' all that an' says can he buy it? An' the bird that owns it says 'yes sir' an' 'let's close the deal.' An' he tells him the price an' it sounds reas'nable an' Mr. Topuchias asks another Greek gentleman named Mr. Papalexis an' he says it's too good to be true an' dig in. Mr. Papalexis says he paid a lot more for his rest'rant than that, an' that he's made——"

"Mr. Topuchias bought the place, then," said George.

"Well, this bird—what's his name?" she turned to Topuchias.

"Brown," said he promptly. "Mr. John Brown."

"I knew it was a hard one," Maisie grinned. "Mr. John Brown he writes out a paper saying this here rest'rant belongs to Mr. Topuchias here now, an' the price is this much an' he says to Topuchias 'I'll give you the key to the front door when you go to the bank with me and get the money for me.' An' Topuchias says 'I don't go to the bank. When I come to this country I keep my money lock in a trunk so nobody will know I got it an' we will go get it out of the trunk.' And when they got to the hotel and the trunk Mr. Topuchias counted out the money an' it left him about a buck or buck-an'-a-half outta his whole roll but he owned a nice rest'rant and would be makin' money right away and Brown says 'Fine!' and gives him the key to the front door. An' Topuchias says 'Come round and eat with me some time' an' Brown says 'I will,' an' 'Goodbye. An' you go round now an' collect your rest'rant.' An' Topuchias did."

"I see," said George.

"But you don't," said Maisie. "He goes to work and shines up the nickle trimmings and then comes the grief in a few days in the shape of a sheriff who closes up this joint for debts this Brown owes for the rest'rant. Bills due everybody."

"You bought it subject to the liens?" George asked the client.

Maisie gasped but came to the rescue.

"He means was you supposed to pay the bills?" she asked.

"No bills, no. Just the res'rant—all I pay for—" said Topuchias.

"It should have been put into escrow," said George judicially. "With notices to creditors published, and all that in the regular channel. That would have eliminated all this trouble. As it is, you bought a gold brick."

"An' it was brass inside. You got the idea," chortled Maisie.

There was no question about it; George was getting quick at catching on. And he spilled such lovely language.

"Has Brown disappeared?"

"That the news film that follows the main picture," Maisie grinned. "When Mr. Topuchias goes to tell his troubles to Mr. Papalexis, he finds out that Mr. Papalexis has sold out his place to Mr. Brown, an' Mr. Topuchias speaks to Mr. Brown about it an' Brown chases him around the block. Says it was reg'lar or something."

"I see," said George. "Well of course we can bring suit for you."

"Now you got the plot, I'll leave you rehearse the act," she said then, grandly, going back to her desk leaving two pairs of eyes behind both filled with admiration. Even George's. It was something new.

For a moment she read the paper. Then she howled: "Whadda you think of that? The whole nine of 'em, still brothers! An' I ain't seen them since I was a mere infant!"

"What's all this?" It was Mr. Wing, the genial, elderly attorney, who never missed a chat with Miss Sinclair when there was opportunity.

"It isn't raining rain today, it's rainin' Greeks!" Maisie bellowed. "There's the 'Argentines, an' the Armenians, an' the Portugese an' the Greeks'—" she sang it, crinkling up her eyes. And Maisie could sing! "Can you beat this? There's a strong act on at the Palace this week that I ain't run across since I left the tent tops in my inf'ncy. They used to know my old gentleman, which was a very good wire walker when he wasn't in his cups, an' on them occasions the tighter he got the looser the wire got an' once it was too loose altogether an' he busted a limb."

Mr. Wing, enjoying her, had now moved into the space between her and the window and got his first good look at her. He, too, like George, was stricken dumb. But not like George, he mentioned it.

"Why Miss Sinclair—" he cried. "You're beautiful! You really are—there's something different about you today——"

"It's my face," she grinned—but grimly. "It's just terrible how styles change. The skin you love to touch is in again, and ears are cafè au lay—" the praise was like wine to her senses.

"What was that about the strong men and your father," he encouraged.

"Oh, some o' father's friends, Mr. Kardamopulous an' his eight brothers, an' oh baby! you ought to see them if they're still in their prime. Pete—he's the

oldest and biggest—he c'd play tug o' war with a locomotive an' have it backin' up hill toward him, believe me. All eight o' them stand in a pyramid on Pete's neck an' him lyin' down, an' he *gets up*—you take my word for it. Size—a shipload of them birds would sink!"

"Nice solid citizens," remarked Mr. Wing, disappearing into his own office, feeling better for his daily laugh.

Just then Mr. Topuchias emerged from George's sanctum and said: "Miss St. Clair, it is to thank you for politely," and went away. Five o'clock came and Maisie got out the new sailor hat.

"Do him any good?" she asked George loudly.

"I don't know. He's going to try to bring the man Brown up to talk to me, but I'm afraid he's stuck for those bills. Too bad. People ought to see a lawyer first, when they don't know any more about business than that. But I'll do what I can."

" 'Course you will, Mr. Dorsey. An' if I know a posthole from a volcano, you'll get him outta it. Ain't you always had swell luck with your clients?"

Forth then to the Palace, to look up the strong men.

Bright and early the next morning Mr. Topuchias arrived with his bone of contention, otherwise Mr. Brown, even before Maisie had arrived. And when her voice was heard a little later, George was impelled to put his head out to see if he had been dreaming yesterday, but no. It was all true.

While this was a different outfit, it was no less perfection than the previous one: soft gray tweeds, a tailored blouse with mannish collar and a smart little bow beneath her heart-shaped chin; the bobbed hair still a cap of waved and satiny smoothness. Yes, this thing was true; Maisie had emerged from a chrysalis of tawdriness and her wings were fine and strong.

"Morning, Boss," she greeted him, smiling with consciousness of her perfection. "Ain't it a grand day? Makes you want to follow a street parade or something. Mr. Topuchias an' his gold brick——"

"Mr. Topuchias and Mr. Brown are already here—" said George, hastily.

"My mistake—" she grinned. "Don't let me keep you."

George withdrew, but just too late to keep Maisie from hearing Brown's voice raised in argument.

"You bought as is, an' you got a swell chance to back out. You paid for it fair and square an' you can try to get it back. That's what I say."

"Hard, I calls it," said Maisie aloud. "Bet he's a little shrimp. Little birds always yell the loudest when you back 'em into a corner. We oughtta sick Pete Kardamopulous on 'im."

As if that were their cue, the outer door opened and in filed what looked like the entire Grecian Army.

"Well Pete! Ain't you up early in the morning? Ain't it fine o' you to rush right over to gimme the

once-over so soon—" she called out, giving her hand in turn to Pete, and Nick, and Jim and the other six of the Kardamopulous family, who took the hand in a huge paw in turn, after which Maisie looked at it and grinned.

"Ain't it a wonder I gotta finger left?" she laughed. And nine Kardamopulouses laughed and shifted to the other foot.

"Ain't this a swell joint?" she asked them. "Beats tightrope walkin'. I walk a straight line here but my neck's all in one piece an' nobody's standin' on it either." She nudged Pete, to his great delight.

"Oh Mr. Wing," she whooped. "C'mon out. I want you should be acquainted with some old friends o' mine. Pete, here, tells me last night when I went backstage to see them at the theatre, which it seems a accident to me is still standin' with them nine in it at once, that he wants to finish up what he started about bein' nine Amurrican citizens an' I told him you'd fix him up. O' course," she added loftily, "if it was a lawsuit I'd have to call Mr. Dorsey. But you get folks to be citizens——"

"I have assisted in some naturalization work——"

"Well make a citizen outta Pete an' his eight brothers. Here, sit down, boys, and make yourselfs to home while Pete talks to Mr. Wing."

Voices, loud and clear, still came from George's room when Pete came back from a conference with Mr. Wing.

"Mr. Kardamopulous tells me he is tired of travel-

ling," said Mr. Wing. "He wants to quit the road and settle down. He thinks he and his brothers will stay here, perhaps, and——"

"Start a rest'rant—" howled Maisie.

"Yes," said the elephantine Pete. "How do you know?"

"My great-aunt's waterfall!" shrieked Maisie. "How'd I know? Ain't you a Greek?"

"Well, we gotta matinee," Pete remarked. "This Mr. Wing, now, Miss Maisie, he's going to take care of things for us. He's a very nice boss for you, Miss Maisie. It's real swell for you to get educated and work here. And you look—like—like a headliner." There was no greater compliment, for Pete.

"Hey you, cut the syrup," Maisie grinned. "Just because you carried me in one hand when I was gettin' my nourishment in liquid form, you needn't spread it on for me. But that ain't my boss. Wait. You gotta meet him." Then she had a sudden thought. "We got a client in there you oughtta meet, too. He's a Greek baby, an' strange as it may seem he had your idea. He boughtta rest'rant. And he'll have to tell you about it."

She dashed to George's door and opened it a little way. "Oh, Mr. Dorsey, c'd I bother you f'r a minute? Or would you come out? And Mr. Topuchias, too. It's Mr. Kardamopulous, you know, the strongest o' the nine strong men at the Palace Theatre this week. All eight of the others, you know, stand on his neck when he's layin' down, an' get up, does that baby?

He does! I want to state! Flicks 'em off like they was flies! One at a time! He pulls big chains in two with 'is fingers. He c'd wring a man's neck with his finger an' thumb."

The third person in that private room had a clear view of the reception lobby. First he saw the biggest human he had ever seen. Then he saw eight others. He looked at that huge thumb and forefinger and shuddered. In single file they stood. It seemed there might be ninety of them instead of nine.

"Kardamopulous!" cried Topuchias.

"Topuchias!" cried Pete Kardamopulous. And

"Topuchias!" cried Pete's eight brothers.

Out of a volcanic eruption of language Maisie and George,—and Mr. Brown—learned that the two families had been friends in the old country. They kissed one another resoundingly and smacked each other's shoulders and shed tears.

"An' Pete, an' Nick an' all the rest of you—" Maisie cried through the uproar, "that's my boss, Mr. Dorsey, an' he knows everything. When you got any business you come to him. He says folks ought to go to a lawyer first to keep outta jail, so you ask him what to do before you do it." She explained to George: "Pete has got the same idea Topuchias had, that he wants to go into the rest'rant business, but he wants to look out or he'll get stung like Topuchias did."

"You got stung?" Pete said quickly siding with

his countryman. What had they done to his brother-Greek?

Topuchias poured forth his story in a jumble of Greek, into Pete's and his eight brothers' outsize ears, and Mr. Brown shrank into his chair as they looked at him ominously. Could crush a man's neck between a thumb and finger, could this Pete? Mr. Brown's collar felt tight.

"Maybe you c'd help Mr. Topuchias out," suggested Maisie brightly. "You been in this country a long time, Pete, an' know how to get around."

"Ain't she a corker?" Pete remarked. "I knew that girl when she was the size o' a pint o' milk. Anything Miss Maisie wants, I'll do it for her." And he meant it.

Maisie looked wickedly at Brown. "You would, wouldn't you, Pete?" she said thoughtfully.

"Well," said George, wearying of the visit. "We'll get back to our business now, Mr. Topuchias, if you don't mind. Mr. Brown, are you——"

"I want my money back," blustered Topuchias.

"You want your money back from this bird?" Pete asked meaningly.

Topuchias nodded his head violently. Mr. Brown tried to talk, looked at those huge hands—that huge thumb—and then at the eight brothers.

"I'll give it back—" he squeaked. "I'll trade you this other place for the one I sold you. This is a better place—I'll do whatever you say——"

"Miss Snclair—" said George mildly. "If you'll just wait outside——"

"Sure," Maisie howled. "Take a string o' chairs, boys, but sit easy!" she cautioned. "Mr. Topuchias'll join us in a minnit."

The entire nine grinned back and filed out.

A minute later, or five, Mr. Brown crept out, a strained look upon his countenance; seemed to calculate the distance from George's door to the hall and made it in nothing flat. With the door closed behind him, his shadow leaned upon the glass as if for breath. And then he moved uncertainly away.

George and Mr. Topuchias came out, smiling.

"He paid me back in money," cried the Greek. "He was a crook. He had the money in his pockets, right with him."

"I'm glad—" crowed Maisie. "I thought he would."

The Greek fraternity went out then, leaving an empty place behind them, exclaiming volubly that they would start a restaurant together and Maisie should have a share in it.

She waved them all out and sank back into her chair.

"Why the exhaustion?" asked Mr. Wing, coming out to see what the noise was about.

"I just been through a Greek letter nishiashun," she laughed wildly. "You try and do it."

"What do you know about Greek-letter societies?"

George asked in astonishment. "Were you ever at college?"

"Not guilty on the first four counts," she howled. "But I can read the funny papers, can't I? The only college I was ever in was a hair-dressing college for a cheap wave an' they burnt half my hair off. But—it grew in—" she patted her sleek coiffure in satisfaction. "Yep—it grew in nicely."

Mr. Wing shook his head and grinned at George. and George grinned back.

"Well, you musta put the fear o' God into that Brown," said she with decisiveness. "But—" and this admiringly, "you could do it—if anybody could." George gulped and fled. He wasn't sure he wasn't being kidded.

"I wish I knew just what was in that head of yours, Miss Sinclair," said Mr. Wing, preparing to depart.

"Oh, it's pretty hollow," she answered modestly. "Hasn't as much in it as most folks', but then maybe what's in it has a chance to move around. If it was packed in too tight, maybe it wouldn't be much good for general use."

"Well," replied Mr. Wing dubiously, "if your head's hollow, I wonder what it would be like with knowledge in it. Miss Sinclair, do you know, I'd stack you up against any college girl. When Greek meets Greek—" he smiled. But Maisie jumped to the other application.

"They start a rest'rant!" she whooped.

And George, sitting inside his office trying to think, shook his head hopelessly as he heard her raucous tones following Mr. Wing down the lobby:

"I already know the college yell: 'Ros-bif-ros-poke-straw'bry-shor'cake-cupsa-cawfee!' Laugh that off!" she cried.

VII

BREACHES OF PROMISE

"I BEEN thinkin'," Maisie announced to the world in general one bright morn, "this is a blame easy world to get along in. I'm gettin' to be in the pluted blotocrat class. Gettin' rich. Me!"

Mr. Wing smiled. "That's nice," he said. "What's the latest?"

"Oh, there's something later'n that," Maisie assured him. "Why, I'm gettin' a swell scale o' wages—strictly non-union too—an' by my sublettin' o' this suite I get my haul each an' ev'ry first o' the month; an' then that fleet o' strong men got together with Mr. Topuchias an' they opened that swell rest'rant an' George made a company outta it for them and they wouldn't see but I had a cut comin' an wrote me out some stock which sends a few nickels home to mamma every few minutes. Beats all the money in the rest'rant business! Ain't dividends the proper noun for that? But—I been savin' an' I'm wonderin' where to put it so it will grow the most. First time in my life. It ain't in the cards, hardly, for a St. Clair to have anything left over!"

"Better watch out, someone will be marrying you for your money," Mr. Wing jibed gently.

"That's something that ain't never faded into the picture," she assured him. "Me and matrimony ain't even faintly related, and from what I see of it from the top row of nigger heaven, the ticket ain't worth the price of admission. An' that reminds me—I gotta new case for George comin' in this morning, an' a heart-renderin' case it is, too."

"Sounds like a divorce," Mr. Wing remarked, starting for his office. The day was well started off now, having had a Maisie-ism to laugh at.

"Even more painful," she howled. "A lady is bein' sued for breach of promise. An' that's something I know something about, as father was sued for that once, when I was a mere infant in a trunktop. He had the picture of her for quite some years, an' believe you me, to look at it was a shock, realizin' what father an' I had missed by her not bein' my mother. She was a mere burlesque queen, an' my mother was a calliope player."

"Indeed!" and Mr. Wing fled, choking.

From such an ancestry, raised under canvas, as she was fond of mentioning, no wonder she was such a fount of originality. From the tan bark to law courts was a far cry!

"This new case now," Maisie continued, although the audience had dwindled to Miss Kellogg, her assistant stenographer, "it's a most interesting one. The lady who'd done the promisin' bein' my landlady, though if you was to ask me, a gentleman was

well off to be out of it, let alone bein' grieved by the lady changin' her mind."

"Don't you like her?" Miss Kellogg merely desired to keep Maisie talking. It wasn't that she really wanted to know.

"Oh, she'll pass in a crowd provided it is a very large crowd," Maisie grinned. "It'd hafto be, with her tippin' the scales at a mere two hundred and forty-eight marked down from two-fifty and givin' her the benefit o' summer weights. I like to live there, at the Shatto de Frangsay, it has an air, you know; an' she caters to the p'feshun an' there is many a sight there that does the eye good in the course o' a day's work—what with Mademoiselle Helene keepin' her trained seals in the basement an' two snappy cloggers only temporarily outta work practicin' up an' down the halls, an' swell parties takin' place in the mezzanine which is half way between the first floor an' the basement.

"It was a party Saturday night, by way of explanashun," Maisie went on, "which is caused Miss de Courcy—that's the lady I spoke of—all this woe. The roomers, which has been more or less permanent stayers, though some of 'em ain't such permanent payers or I miss my guess, took it into their heads to give Miss de Courcy a send-off on accountta her just gettin' engaged and tellin' that fack to some in conf'dence, and they invites the entire place to the blow-out never dreamin' that the party in the back

room on the third has had his eye on her for as long ago as last winter, an' when they lets the cat outta the bag it's quite embarrassin' for all concerned, as Mr. Muffet, who's the chef in the café next to the place as well as the third floor back roomer, takes a faintin' fit and carries on quite terrible. An' Mr. Snyder, who's the lucky stiff accordin' to how you look at it, gets real incensed as to why Mr. Muffet should take it so hard and accuses Miss de Courcy in personal terms, an' she gives notice to the three xylophone players who got up the party that their rooms was wanted on the first, as it was a secret and she couldn't keep on trustin' a party she couldn't trust, if you get the idea an'——"

"It must have been quite an affair," said Miss Kellogg primly, regretting her interest.

"Oh, it was. Them little things make the place interestin'," said Maisie, unaware of the sarcasm.

"I'll dictate now, Miss Snclair," came George's voice from within.

"You c'n start now but you won't finish," Maisie howled cheerfully. "I gotta client comin' in at ten an' it's five minutes after now. What with her bein' the wardrobe mistress in musical comedy for so many years and accustomed to gettin' in just before fifteen minute warning, I lay a dime to nothing she'll drift in before you get down the paragraph."

"We'll start," said George, ignoring her as usual.

Ignore her or start a debate; that was all he could do. And debates had a way of becoming unpleasantly

noisy. So pencil in hand, Maisie went in, but was saved the beginning of actual labor by the breathless entrance of Miss de Courcy.

"Is Miss St. Clair in?" asked a coy voice and George's jaw took on a stiff line. "Ain't she the blessed child bein' right on hand when a lady is took with tribulations?"

As to that, George failed to agree with her; but he bowed politely as Maisie introduced her and faded away.

"Little ray o' sunshine," she went on. "Kleig light" would have been more to his way of thinking, but he let it pass. He was becoming resigned to letting things pass. There did not seem to be any way around it. But praise of this Maisie never was the way into his heart.

"You had a matter to discuss with me?" he asked crisply.

"Oh dear, yes, but I got to get to it gradual. It sounds so cruel right cold off the iron. You must be gentle with me, Mr. Dorsey, I got such a sensitive nature. Miss St. Clair was telling me how sympathetic an' gentle you always was with a lady in sorrow."

George groaned, inwardly.

"Anybody could tell that, too, Mr. Dorsey, with them tender eyes. Don't the ladies always tell you what wonderful eyes you have, Mr. Dorsey?"

"I'll try to be sympathetic," he said dryly. "Miss Snclair said this was a breach of promise case."

"Ain't that a terrible thing to accuse a lady of?" she wailed. "Especially a lady who wouldn't dream of bruising another's heart. Why that guy's loco—I mean, I never had the slightest idea of Mr. Muffet's being int'rested in me in an armorous manner——"

She and Maisie sounded alike, he mourned. This was going to be awful.

"Suppose you tell me the facts," he suggested. "Were you served with papers?"

"Oh dear, yes, right after breakfast. It was just as I was going up to ask The Three Musical Anchovies if they could pay a little on account, there being a matter of four weeks dragging, an' here comes a squint-eyed party who says he's got a special delivery for Miss de Courcy and I introduces myself and he hands me this and beats it."

She almost sobbed then: "And when I seen what it was and it reminded me of all the untrue things I was accused of by the party who was my fiancé until Saturday night when they let it loose on the house, and it being them Anchovies that done it, my feelings just couldn't stand no more and I continued by way of the stairs as the autmatic elevator was temporarily depleted and what I said to them deadbeats was plenty, losing me a perfectly good fiancé like that who was willing to remove the mortgage on the chateau which is healthy and gathering speed as you might say, as it goes, and then getting me into this trouble with Muffet who musta had his optic

on that apartment house because I certainly didn't give him no encouragement——"

George now interrupted the flood of talk. "I'd like to ask a few questions," he said grimly. "We'll see about the grounds for this action."

"I'm sure my life is an open book," she replied, sniffling.

George proceeded to ask the customary questions for his understanding of the legal points involved. Miss de Courcy admitted that both she and the plaintiff, August Muffet, were unmarried; that they had known each other for two years; but when it came to the allegations that the plaintiff had proposed marriage and that the defendant had, by her actions allowed him to believe himself betrothed to her and had accepted his ring therefor, she was highly indignant.

"The poor has-been," she shouted. "There's the ring—look at it! A miserable little flawed stone which he turned over to me a year ago for seven weeks' rent! As for my lettin' him believe we was engaged, a lady's got to keep her house full of roomers, and sooner than have anybody move out she'd dodge sayin' right out that he wasn't what she was lookin' for in a husband. An' that list—can you picture a gentlemen keepin' accounts of how much money he spent on a lady for entertainment and then throwin' it up to her at a later date? Don't that show you he's been figuring to get me into something and then

pop it to me? As a heart of gold, now I ask you——"

"Suppose you leave these documents," said George. "I have the story now, and I'll frame an answer. You come in tomorrow."

"Yes sir," said Miss de Courcy, meekly. "An' if he pesters me this afternoon——"

"Pesters?"

"Well, he pounds on the door of my apartment and yells in do I want to talk business."

"Is he still living at your house?" asked George, amazed.

"Well since his rent is paid in advance at the present moment, he's got a right to live there," she returned, with dignity. "Who am I, that I should drive out paying guests?"

"I see," and George bit his lip. "Well, send him to see me."

"That's sweet of you to take that worry off my slender shoulders," cooed the lady whose shoulders were not slender, to say the nicest thing about them. "I'll tell him."

She was on the verge of starting afresh, but George opened the door and there was nothing to do but go. However, she seemed to have no idea of departing just yet, but seated herself by Maisie for a chat.

"You gotta swell job, dearie, ain't you?" she insinuated.

"I'm per'fly well satisfied," said Maisie promptly. George had not yet closed his door.

" 'Tain't every young and beautiful girl as has a

chance to sit all day behind closed doors with such a handsome fella as your boss," said her landlady. "Tell me, angel, me being romantic inclined, is it just a job or is he interested?"

"Strictly business," said Maisie, getting up and closing George's door. "He's good looking," she added. "But not my style."

"I always liked his type—" said Miss de Courcy, sighing. "One thing I had against August Muffet was his sandy mustache—an' he was so fat, too. Dearie, tell me, do you think he can get any money outta me for his wounded heart? Oh, the world's so hard on a woman alone. An' with that mortgage—with nobody paying their rent—half the time I'm flat—that mortgage is eating me alive."

Maisie had heard that last remark, even though she was working through the monologue.

"What? You wantta sell the shatto?" she pounced upon that.

"Oh Lord, I'd love to—but there ain't no market—" wailed the lady.

"You come outside," said Maisie firmly and led her out into the hall. A moment later Maisie returned for fountain pen, paper, and a large readymade seal which she took outside with her. And when, a little later, she returned with the face of the proverbial cat, canary inside, she dived into the work on her desk headily.

Suddenly she remembered the breach of promise case and stuck her head into George's office. "What

chanct has old Muffet got to collect?" she howled. "Any?"

"I'm not so sure," George replied. "I'm not particularly impressed by your friend, Miss Snclair, and I dislike immensely to defend such a case as this." Not often did George have such an opportunity to rebuke her and he took it gratefully. "The list of Mr. Muffet's expenditures, which list is attached to his complaint, is rather illuminating. That, if not Miss de Courcy's evasion of my questions, almost convinces me that there is something to his allegations."

"Well knock me cold!" Maisie declaimed, leaning against the door. "Ain't she hired you? Ain't that enough to make you on her side?"

"Not necessarily. I am seriously considering refusing to go ahead with the defense of the case. And in future, Miss Snclair, I should prefer that you consult me before you send promiscuous cases into this office. I am not in favor of sensational business." He turned away coldly.

Maisie backed slowly out of the office, temporarily tongue-tied. But not for long. "Gimme the list—" she demanded a moment later. "She said it was like a Scotch account book."

"I have not finished with the documents,—" he refused. "And I need quiet in which to study the case."

That was that. However, after lunch he decided to dictate an answer, and Maisie grinned at that.

George was making a lot of grandstand plays since they moved into these swell offices! And she quietly abstracted the list of expenditures at that time. It was quite worth the abstraction.

"My galloping carp!" she bellowed after a hurried reading. The bellow brought Mr. Wing out on the run. "C'mere, Mr. Wing, and take a few lessons on how to land a lady painlesslike."

"September 1, one hat, $5.95;
September 2, two sirloin steaks, $1.05;
September 4, candy, $.50;
September 5, flowers, $.30;
September 6, electric bill, $16.70;
September 10, one quart gin, $4.00";

"Ain't that rich?" Maisie gurgled. "I gotta go apologize to George for thinkin' he was prejudiced. September last year she done him up brown; October is about the same; November and December is lighter, but January she got her hooks into him for plenty! He musta paid the interest on the mortgage for it's here—cash advanced $157.50. I calls that—well—anyway I calls it! I ain't prepared to say what, cause she's our client. But Muffet ain't so far wrong——"

Her mood was broken in upon by the telephone.

"Oh dearie, that you?" came a voice. "Mr. Muffet was just here an' he caused a dreadful scene! And I sent him up to see your Mr. Dorsey. He says he'll go to see Mr. Snyder and tell him all those

dreadful things and I been having enough trouble today without explaining all those lies! As if the mere fact that a gentlemen was nice to me and brought me little attentions like a steak now and then was anything lousy about a lady's character. I ain't real sure he'd swallow—that is—I mean swallow his pride over the notoriety since it was a public bawl-out Mr. Muffet give me at the party and Snyder right there to take it in, but I have hopes that he's gentleman enough to forgive and forget if Mr. Dorsey could get Muffet to move, and it would be a great relief to me and I'd gladly pay back the price o' the few momentoes he give me, Muffet I mean, if it would keep his mouth shut from now on——"

"I'll fix it up," Maisie babbled after that much. "But you forgot to leave Mr. Dorsey a retainin' fee this mornin' when you was here and should I pay him for you and take it outta the price of—our little deal?"

"What's he goin' to charge me, dearie?" Miss de Courcy wanted to know.

"I'll tell you later," said Maisie, as the door opened.

And she banged the receiver up. Maisie stuck her head into George's office again and demanded information. "Say listen, now, I want the lowdown on this thing. Has Muffet got a chanct to collect from de Courcy—can we beat it or has he got it on her?"

"Upon further reflection I am convinced that Mr. Muffet has a good case against Miss de Courcy," said

George. "Her chance to win is almost nil, and I would prefer after all that she get another attorney."

"Why!" Maisie was aghast. "She wants the best, an' there ain't no lawyer can do nothing you can't." In spite of himself George's chest rose an inch. But his demeanor was cool.

"It's too much like a farce," he said. "I don't care to handle it."

"I getcha," said Maisie. "An' I can't say as I blame you for not wantin' to waste your time on quarts o' gin an' five dollar hats. But if I c'd settle it for the office without takin' your time you wouldn't care, would you?"

"Settle it?" asked George with lifted eyebrows.

"Yeah. I gotta swell idea." She grinned. "'Stall right?"

"Since I decline to handle it, I do not care what you do about it," he answered. "Except that you may not act for me!" And a tiny hope crept in that she might do something for which he could, with perfect justice, fire her.

"Maybe it won't work," she said, going back to her desk.

George stalked out a little later, angry because he had neglected a chance to offer biting sarcasm. He could have remarked upon the impudence of a typist who thought she could handle a legal matter! This Muffet person was undoubtedly in the right, and Snyder must have shown evidences of greater wealth to have won the lady, causing her to jilt Muffet.

No, he, George Dorsey, could not afford to be mixed up in the case, which would be a huge laugh for the newspapers when it reached them. A landlady of a cheap rooming house, a cook and—whatever Snyder was.

He decided then that he would forbid Maisie to touch it either. It wouldn't be good for the office if it should get out. And when he was ready, next morning, to mention it, she accosted him first.

"I gotta speak to you for a minit," she said. "Gotta hurry, too, or things will be breakin' before I'm ready for 'em."

Once inside his office she said mysteriously: "Muffet's here. I got him in Mr. Wing's office waitin', an' I got Miss de Courcy treed across the lobby in Anderson's room. An' all you gotta do is just read Muffet's complaint over to him an' ask him does he still feel that way. An' I'll be takin' notes, kinda like. And you just look wise an' I'll do the rest."

"What in the name of—" George began, but Maisie hadn't waited. She was back in a second, ushering in the chef, Mr. Muffet.

"Mr. Dorsey, this is the bird that's suin' Miss de Courcy for breach o' promise an' he come to see if she was willing to settle an' I said you'd talk to 'im."

"Mr. Muffet?" asked George.

"Yeah," said Muffet.

"Did you have this complaint drawn?" George demanded.

"Yeah, an' believe me I can collect," said Muffet

nastily. "That dame thought I was an easy mark and had me digging up for a year, buying stuff for her and making believe the Chateau wasn't paying nothing, and she salting it away all the time; and she turned me down because I wouldn't lend her no more."

"You lent her money?" George felt ridiculous, not knowing what to say next.

"Lent! Why, Mr. Muffet!" said Maisie. "When you says all those gifts was for love and affection and because you thought she was goin' to marry you! And now you say they was loans! I wouldn't call you a very good business man, lendin' without no security."

"There was plenty of security. Didn't she own the Chateau?"

"Was you countin' on that then, instead of marryin' her?"

"No, of course not, but a fellow can't be made a fool of," said he.

"But you really didn't want to marry her, did you?" Maisie went on in a deadly tone. "Wasn't it getting a hold on the shatto you was thinking of?"

"It was not. I'd a-married her in a minute. I'm very sad and—humiliated at losing her."

"Her? Or the shatto—" Maisie persisted. "If she didn't have the shatto you'd a married her just the same and spent all that money?"

Muffet grew red and then defied her. "What kind of a guy do you think I am—" he cried. "Of course!"

"Ain't that lovely?" Maisie sighed. "So romantic, too." George was watching, spellbound. " 'Cause then it will make you so happy when I tell you she's been thinkin' it over and seen what a fool she was, and she knows it was only infatuashun for that Snyder who spoke of travelin' for a soap company and seein' the country, but it's really you she loves; an' she give Snyder the bounce an' is in the other room waitin' to kiss an' make up and marry you today. An' since you don't care nothin' about the Shatto de Frangsay belongin' to her, you won't care a bit that she sold it at a loss. You know, when she told Snyder that she'd lost money on it an' couldn't keep goin' on accountta the mor'gage an' had sold it, she seen then that he wasn't the man you was."

"Sold it!" gasped Mr. Muffet. "When? Who to?"

"Oh, a while back, to me," said Maisie nonchalantly. "She's just runnin' the place for me and o' course she ain't spoke to none but her intimate frien's about that but since you wasn't thinkin' about the money you won't mind? An' when you and her get married I hope you'll live there. I'd love to rent you one o' the front sweets an' I'd make it reas'nable."

"I don't believe it! After all the interest I paid on that mortgage! It ain't true—" shouted Mr. Muffet.

"I was afraid you wouldn't think so," Maisie went on calmly. "So I brought over the papers that was made out by the man that owns the mor'gage. I'm

goin' to clear it before long. An' since she ain't got all them troubles on her chest——"

"She still has got the money she got for it—" Muffet reached for a slender hope.

"Unforchunat'ly she owed it all—she's about flat right now," she replied. "But a good man that loves her—" she beamed. "I'll call her."

"Here—wait—no!" howled Muffet. Seizing his hat he tore out of the office and was gone before Maisie could make the doorway. Maisie came back escorting Miss de Courcy. "I don't think we'll have any more trouble with that breach of promise case," she said calmly. "I think Mr. Dorsey scared him outta it, somehow. I bet he'll be moved by the time you get home, even if you hurried. Now, Mr. Dorsey, Miss de Courcy wants to start a breach of promise case against Mr. Snyder who renigged from his vow to wed her, in fact, done it twice. It does beat all what a swell front like the Shatto de Frangsay will do to a man! It looks like a million an' they get sore if you ain't got it. Miss de Courcy no more than got Mr. Snyder placified against one breach when he made another and if that ain't breaches of promise, I don't know what is."

"But—Miss Snclair—" stammered poor George.

"Yes, it'll be little enough after all what I've had to suffer," Miss de Courcy sniffled. "Though after all's said and done a person's entitled to what little soothing they can get from cruel words. But a lady

that's had her feelings tampered with, you know how she feels, don't you, Mr. Dorsey?" She glanced coyly at him.

"That Snyder party which told me in the presence of this angel that his intentions was serious and then when we spoke about me having sold the Chateau—he busted the traces for the second time——"

It appeared that this was Maisie's busy day. Miss Kellogg rapped and said there was a caller for Maisie, also that she was wanted on the telephone.

"It's Miss Helene, at the shatto—" she said after a moment's conversation over George's desk phone. "She says he's packin' and ain't losin' no time. That's grand—" she spoke into the instrument. "You might speak to him and say that Miss de Courcy's startin' a breach against him now, an' that will speed things up a little. And he hadn't better leave no tracks. It worked—" she announced, hanging up the phone. "Did Miss Kellogg say someone wished to see me?"

And a moment later she ushered Mr. Snyder into George's sanctum.

"It's Snyder, lovie," she said from the reception room. "He was waitin' for you at the apartment and Miss Helene told him you was here. He couldn't control himself but rushed up to tell you that he desires matrimony after all."

Sybil de Courcy almost fainted at that. But she recovered and threw herself into Snyder's gangling arms while George dodged out into the lobby.

"Miss Snclair—" he said angrily. "I've had all I

can stand of this. This isn't a matrimonial agency. I want that office cleared. And when they've gone away, I want a few words with you."

"Hey, you two," Maisie howled cheerfully, as George stamped toward Mr. Wing's office. "You'd better go get a license before you change your minds again. And this is a five day notice that we got a quarantine out against breach cases."

It was as they were closing the hall door that Maisie heard Snyder say: "Here, my love, if you'll pardon me, are your bank books which I noticed lying right out on your desk at home, and with that blackmailing Muffet around I thought I better bring them up to you. And now for that license."

"Oho!" said Maisie. "So while waiting he snooped a bit, did he? Well, let them as are used to troubles have more o' them. Me, I got plenty of my own."

George, with Mr. Wing a close second, came toward her desk. She dodged into George's office.

"Was you wishing a word with me?" she asked casually. "Could it wait a minute, because I've got a coupla things on my chest too. First, here's your retainer fee from Miss de Courcy, I got it last night outta her, but I suppose since it's all settled, that's all there is, there isn't any more. But it ain't stingy, I saw to that. And next: I'd like to have you take charge o' a little deal I'm makin' with Newcomb Realty Company, which bought a option on the shatto from me yestiddy noon."

"Miss Sinclair—" said Mr. Wing. "Mr. Dorsey

says that you bought that apartment house from your landlady when you knew it was a losing proposition——"

"It never lost nothing for her," said Maisie quickly. "Not as long as she had friends to come to her aid. But I looked into it careful before partaking of the deal. I been lookin' into it every evening at six an' as early some mornings as that same hour. I know all about that place from the roof to the trained seals in the basement and I wasn't makin' no mistake though it was a accident that at the Royal Dancing Club I should make the acquaintance of a young bird who works for the Newcomb people, and he should tell me that they was trying to get ahold of the entire block on which I lived. So you see I wasn't riskin' much. She wanted to sell an' I bought, though what wasn't mor'gaged wasn't much of a deal, but plenty for a trifle o' profit from the comp'ny that's buying it from me."

"You've—sold it—the Chateau?" George gasped.

"You're darn tootin'," Maisie said scornfully. "Whadda you think I bought it for, my old age? Saddled with debts so that there's only the price o' a flivver in the whole turnover? That's all."

"But Miss de Courcy——"

"Thought she was doin' me a dirty trick sellin' it to me," said Maisie calmly. "Anybody that wants to can do me that kinda dirty trick any time; she got what she wanted—a husband. She'd a sold any time this year that she c'd get out from under. As I was

saying, it was luck that I had the third and fourth and fifth foxtrot with this bird who knew his firm was getting ready to start out after that propitty. I'd appreshiate it if you'd take care o' that deal, here's all the papers. At your reg'lar rates, o' course," she added with dignity.

"Why—certainly—" said George, not looking at Mr. Wing, who was shaking, oddly.

"And what—was you wantin' to see me about?" she asked then.

"Well—I mentioned it before—about turning weeping ladies loose on me without consulting me——"

"Don't worry—" Maisie howled. "I'm through bein' a little ray o' sunshine for bawling parties which would do me up brown in the middle of a sob if they could get away with it. I wish her joy of Snyder and I wish him joy of her bank books—an' oh yes, will you fix me up all the notices that the shatto is sold so I c'n tack 'em up or whatever I have to do; otherwise some of them trained seals or something, might sue me for breach o' promise cause they gotto move. It's a hard world—" she moved away. "Well you can call up Newcomb's an' tell 'em the deal's OK."

"Dorsey—" said Mr. Wing. "I don't know whether she is brainless or absolutely clever. Diabolically——"

"That last word is good," said George.

VIII

A WOMAN ALWAYS HAS THE LAST WORD

GEORGE certainly pitied himself when he discovered what Maisie had done to the Collins case. Of course, it was partially his own fault for letting her go to the courthouse and attend to such things; but time was when she had done things right. Now and then. And other attorneys left such things to their secretaries—but this was one of the ever increasing moments when George felt that a resort to murder was the only thing left.

"Miss Snclair—" he roared, and a terrible sound it was, too.

"Oh yes, Mr. Dorsey," she grinned. "Save your breath. I ain't on the floor below." Realizing that this was the wrong time to be playful as soon as she had said it. George was on the warpath this time, for sure.

"I wonder if you realize the terrible mistake you made on the Collins matter?" he scowled and sneered at the same time. A feat of itself.

"No, what?"

"You overlooked a very important thing," he continued.

"Well ain't that too bad? It's a good thing you

gotta head for details, with me so absentminded sometimes," she grinned broadly. "Whatta I done now?"

The power of speech, which had threatened to leave him altogether, returned.

"A very small item," he said. "I think perhaps you didn't know that a damage case for personal injuries is generally tried before a jury. Probably it hadn't occurred to you that half of your verdict in such cases comes from the sympathy of twelve fellow men. So, without consulting me, you had the Collins trial set before a judge! Of course, I'm not astonished at *you;* the two things which astonish me are first, that I even considered letting you do such an important thing, and second, that the attorney for the Coast-Wide Stages should let you get away with it."

Maisie was silent.

"The chief joke is this," said George then, and bitterly, "is that this case will undoubtedly go off calendar and have to be reset, and that I am paid for my services at the time of trial, if ever! That may only delay us a matter of three or four months."

"He's been studyin' oratory—" Maisie thought, what with those gestures and that expressive brow. But aloud she said: "I'm real grieved, Mister Dorsey that you don't appreshiate what I thought was doin' your client a favor! Sympathy comes in handy, I gotta admit, when a party gets it; but it hit me between the eyes that a party like Mrs. Collins, who ain't as young and handsome as she used to be,

would stand a better show without one, that mole on her nose not bein' attractive to any twelve men that ever lived! And it hit me that damages from a jury is one class of cash that a person doesn't spend until after the Soopreme Court has ok'd the check, and that still means try and collect, while a person who seems to care as much as that Collins dame does about one Indian-copper cent would be glad to get a saving of twenty-four dollars per each and every day that the trial goes on, under the head of jury, at two dollars per ju—and that would be a favor she could understand. I'm sorry you're so disappointed."

With great dignity she got some work out of her desk and dropped her eyes to indicate that the interview was over. Flabbergasted, he went back into his office.

"Overlooked my sister's tame whale," she roared a little herself. "Some folks are so busy lookin' for what others overlook that they do a little overlookin' on their own hook."

That nearly floored George. Maisie, the nonchalant and joyous, the carefree and insouciant, had barked back. A wild impulse to open the door and apologize struck George amidships, but he managed to quell the mutiny instantly. Fine state of affairs this was. Imagine his feeling at that moment to hear a strange voice outside: "Miss, would you give me two dollars to halp bury a poverty-stricken lawyer?" and her loud and clear reply—and force-

ful! "I'll give you ten if you'll let me pick the lawyer!"

"That sounds like mutiny—" Mr. Wing called from his office.

"It is," said Maisie firmly. "I put my front foot too far out this morning and fell over it, and I been sore ever since."

Mr. Wing was enjoying the sidelines and knew all the symptoms, therefore he made for George's room for a smoke and a laugh.

"What's she done now?" he asked, entering and closing the door behind him. George explained.

"Oh that's easy," said Mr. Wing. "You can explain to the presiding judge and get it changed to a jury trial with only a short continuance. I'm going to the courthouse now. Come on with me, and get it attended to."

An hour later George returned. Maisie had forgotten the battle. She even grinned at him. "Get it changed?" she jibed.

"No," said George with dignity. And what more could George be expected to say? Could he tell the truth? Indeed he could not. By no means: for the reason he had not got the trial changed was after this manner!

For even as George entered the chambers of the presiding judge he was met with: "Collins vs. the Coast-Wide Stages? Well, that's strange. The defendant was in here this morning trying to get that

trial changed over. Said they neglected to send a man up on the day the case was set for trial and that it went to trial before a judge without their knowledge."

"Without their—" George almost choked.

So, the young devil had been lying, and her quick story about saving money for his client had been invented upon the spur of the moment; what had really happened was that no one else being there, she had merely been told the date and walked out, and that was all there was to it.

"It was quite without my knowledge," said George to the judge. "I was very busy that day and sent my secretary, Miss Snclair, to get the date for me. I didn't notice until this morning that it was a judge instead of a jury trial."

"Miss Sinclair!" And the eye of the presiding judge brightened. "Oh—of course, you're *that* Dorsey! Glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Dorsey. With two thousand lawyers, more or less, running up here all the time, month in and month out, it's a job remembering them unless you belong to the same club, or something like that. But Miss Sinclair—man, we know her. That girl's a jewel! There isn't a corner in her head that hasn't a family of ideas moving in every minute she lives. You're a lucky man. I remember the case perfectly, now. Clever little lady, I remember that it puzzled me at first when she said she guessed a jury would be too expensive. You know, unused as I am to any one so young who thinks

ahead like that I was—well I thought she referred to the jury fee, but then I got it without her saying anything further! Naturally, as the case hinges upon legal argument rather than fact, you would want to do your argument before a judge learned in the law, and not to a jury of laymen!" He seemed satisfied of that. "I got her point at once. By the way, is she trying the case?"

Dazed, George could only gasp. "No. She isn't admitted. I do the trial work."

"Well competent people in the office certainly take a load off a trial lawyer's shoulders. Now, don't you worry about the defendant's getting it changed to a jury trial. Although I gathered that they are going to approach you with a suggestion to drop it from the calendar, which would mean a resetting, and you know that, of course. However, I've no doubt that your Miss Sinclair will handle them right. Well, Dorsey, drop in for a chat any time, and give my regards to the little lady."

George was in the corridor then, wondering how it happened.

So, George hadn't had the trial changed.

Maisie blew into his office right behind him. "Of course you know your own business best," she began. "An' if you wanta jury trial it's your funeral. But when those blame nabobs want one too, it seems like we oughtta stick for a judge."

"How do you know they want a jury trial?" he asked quickly.

"Why they been tryin' for a week to get me to have the case dropped off the calendar to have it reset. An' I been pullin' the con'frence stuff heavy and passin' 'em up like they was highbinders. They got scared, too, an' served a notice on us half a hour ago that they was changin' lawyers."

"A notice!" cried George. "Why, Millford and Cheeseman are their attorneys."

"Was," corrected Maisie, grimly. "I shouldn't wonder that some'pm I said to their process server had some'pm to do with it."

"What—" he pleaded. "What, Miss Snclair, did you say?"

"Oh I just mentioned that we was bringin' in the best legal talent there was, to clean 'em up. I says that a woman which was crippled like Mrs. Collins by their company deserved to get their last thin dime an' no doubt would. I was meanin', Mr. Dorsey, that you was going to strut your stuff and show 'em what real lawyers was like. But I got the idea he musta misunderstood as he said: 'Who you gettin'?' and as that had all the earmarks o' a dirty dig, I says 'They don't come too big for us.'"

"Miss Snclair—" George barked. "This is going too far."

"Yeah," said Maisie in a bored way, "I know it. The interduction and the first and last chapters and the star down at the bottom o' the page. I know I opened my mouth too wide, but you ain't got to tell it to me. But all the same it worried 'em. They've gone

and hired no less than Elmer J. Merriwether himself to try their funny case."

She seemed pleased. George could have throttled her where she stood. After her boasts, the defendants had gone and hired Elmer J. Merriwether, the best known trial lawyer on the coast! Elmer J. Merriwether was the pinnacle; was a trial conductor par excellence. That was what she had done to him. She, blunderer that she was, had sent him into a trial against Elmer J. Merriwether.

" 'Tis no wonder you're tickled," she said brightly, when he was only trying to frame a sufficiently vitriolic vituperation. "I was pleased myself. Give you a chance to lick the best lawyer of 'em all. Nothing like it for gettin' you big business. And it isn't as if they thought their own lawyers could beat you, either. I sure consider it a compliment. I always knew your chance would come." She beamed at him.

With these small expressions of confidence Maisie turned away. "I know you want to think it over now, so I'll beat it," she said. "Don't you worry none. You gotta foolproof case anyhow. And who was it—Mr. Blackstone, in his letters from a politician to his son or something like that, said 'If the law's against you, holler facts, if the facts are against you, holler law, but if both are against you cuss the other lawyer." Giggling merrily she withdrew!

It was lucky for Maisie that she went out to lunch just then. Luckier still that Mr. Wing dropped in at that moment for later developments.

"H'm," he reflected. "It's sure, son, that the defendants are scared at something. What kind of a case have you?"

"It's a genuine case, sir," said George. "Mrs. Collins was badly injured in a stage accident, entirely the fault of the driver. Her hand will always be crippled. She can't use it. I'm not afraid of not winning the case, it's the size of the verdict I'm afraid of. We sued for fifty thousand hoping to get half that. And now this——"

"Yes, I know," Mr. Wing soothed him. "But when you come down to it, wasn't our Maisie about right when she said it was a chance for you? Imagine it, Dorsey, your first really big trial case, and against Elmer Merriwether!"

"I don't get a thrill out of that," said George. And then he stopped. Not even to kindly old Mr. Wing could he admit that he was just plain scared. He had to win this case, but—Merriwether!

One thing was sure. If he lost this case, nothing in the world this Maisie could do, even if she laid the world in his lap, would save her. And he went back to rehearsing his evidence for the morrow.

The morrow, which did not pan out. For when the defense attorney came into court he did it with grace and nonchalance. He had just been retained on the case; was not familiar with it; he politely requested a continuance. A month. The court gave it to him. But George, even as he assured Mrs. Collins that it was a shame, breathed more freely. He had a month's

grace himself. A month more to rehearse an oration which would move a heart of stone on behalf of his client and her twisted hand. Respite was welcome to George.

The month passed, with George rehearsing his speech behind closed doors, before mirrors, rolling resounding phrases off his tongue. A month in which Maisie practiced biting her tongue every time George's door opened. A month in which the tension was strained around the office. Other clients with small matters could wait. George had a TRIAL on.

And then a morning—bright, busy, and mad.

"Whither away?" asked Mr. Wing, as Maisie was scurrying around to flick off dust, shine a shoe, pin a bow—fresh gloves to take from virgin tissue paper.

"Whither?" bleated Maisie. "Whither dost suppose? Isn't the Collins case today? And ain't I got to see George win it?"

"Does he know you're going?" Mr. Wing inquired blandly.

"I'll tell a capering world he doesn't." she cried. "But I don't dare let him climb aboard this band wagon without some backing. My great uncle's moustache cup! Ain't I got a right to be the gallery when I got him into it? Start the applause at the right time, and all that?"

Mr. Wing looked puzzled. Did she mean it? "Applause?"

"Why certainly. Ain't the other lawyer got the whole world for his gallery already and ain't we got

to make 'em think George is as good in his line as any act on the bill? Every new act has got to have some cappers to start the hands."

"Well—er—hpp—" choked the old gentleman. "You know, they don't have applause in trials."

"They don't!" she gasped. "Oh well, maybe I can do something to bolster him up if he starts slippin'."

It was a fog-cool morning; with a tingle in her feet and a twinkle in her amber eyes Maisie reached the courtroom rapidly filling with lawyers and litigants; lawyers with whiskers and lawyers without whiskers; lawyers with a clean shave and lawyers needing one; lawyers immaculately groomed and lawyers who looked as if they had slept in their clothes; lawyers with brief cases and bulging pockets; lawyers with empty hands and empty pockets; lawyers with important-looking clients and lawyers without a client to their names; and George, sitting inside the railing with Mrs. Collins, both stony-faced.

Maisie loved every bit of it. She drank it in. She loved the bailiff whose arm was in a sling, and the clerk whose expression looked as stiff as if it had been; the velvet hangings which framed the bench; loved the chairs in the jury-box; most of all the moment of deathly silence when the bailiff rapped on his desk and the judge appeared in dignity, the crowd upon its feet. She even loved the spectators.

She took a seat in the last row, making herself small behind a fat lady. She expected to hear them break into the doxology when the clerk read his

"Hear ye—hear ye—mbfasssss—now in session—" that was all she understood. And the reading of the calendar began.

She wanted to laugh and she wanted to cry, but she did neither. For the first time in her life she knew absolute panic. Words droned on and then she heard: "Collins versus Coast-Wide Stages" and George moved over to the large table and took a swivel chair. A bored looking man sat down at the other end of the table and the conflict was on.

Maisie suddenly realized that the bored-looking man was Elmer J. Werriwether. He wasn't much for looks. Looked dyspeptic. Which just proved that you couldn't always tell.

Throughout that day and the next Maisie heard the story of that accident told forty different ways. By narrative, by coaxing, by question and by threat, both George and the famous Merriwether made the witnesses talk. Neither side seemed to have the better of it. It was anybody's win.

Maisie began to be a little bored with it and decided that if that was all there was to it, she would not waste any more time, but she *did* want to hear George orate. He ought to know his speech by this time; he had been mumbling and muttering his lines for a month, although he thought no one suspected it.

The only exciting thing was getting into and out of the courtroom without George seeing her and beating his time back to the office so that he might not discover her absence. There was one pleasant

moment on the second morning, though, when Mr. Wing slipped into a chair beside George and she realized that he felt the need of counsel; it was nice to know that Mr. Wing, who looked important, was boosting for George. Rooter's bench, as it were. Elmer Merriwether seemed to take it pretty calmly. He didn't jump at it the way George did, but this was old stuff to him. He just drawled something out now and then.

It was the afternoon of the second day that Maisie's gods smiled. Two men in the back row were whispering, and as George was busy at the time expounding something out of a book which no one seemed interested in—and she couldn't understand—it occurred to her that it wasn't at all respectful for these fellows to whisper; it brought their talk into her consciousness then, and during a pause she heard part of it.

"Seems like Cheeseman could have done as much as Merriwether has done so far," said one. "He isn't even objecting to the cross-examination—I don't see that he's worth what we're getting stuck."

"Sh—" the other cautioned. "He isn't just a trial man, you know. He isn't missing anything. See him putting down little things now and then? He saves all his stuff for the argument. That's his game. Cheeseman was all right for the trial, but he can't talk worth a cent."

Maisie missed the next, but a moment later there was more.

"Say, when he turns on the oratory, he can make you think black is a light yellow. He hypnotizes them. This Dorsey won't have a chance then! Merriwether will make the judge believe that Dorsey caused the wreck himself."

Maisie turned a startled amber eye in their direction. Just two respectable and prosperous looking gentlemen. Nothing more! But she knew what she knew—and what could she do about it?

The first thing was to get out of the courtroom where there was room to think—and perhaps ask questions of someone who knew. She tiptoed out. Once in the corridor she peeped back in, and Mr. Wing caught the amber eye and wished he was out there with her. George didn't need him particularly. There hadn't been any fireworks. Nothing brilliant in cross-examination. In fact the renowned Merriwether was disappointing to Mr. Wing. Now and then he had even seemed negligent. Unless he was saving up for argument——

A hand beckoned to him from the crack in the door. He sat up and looked. Undoubtedly it was meant for him. Maisie's face appeared and nodded emphatically. He got out of the room without disturbing anyone.

"It's all off," gulped Maisie. "George's beaten to a pulp."

"Oh, I don't think so," said he. "Merriwether seems not to have any the best of it."

"So far—" Maisie blazed. "That's it. It ain't the

cookin' of the meal he bothers with, it's the sauce he pours over it. That's what wins the prize, the taste he leaves in their mouth. He's gonna twist George up so, when he talks, that there won't be nothing left but the fur lining. And there ain't no way to stop him short of poisoning him. An' I'd almost do it—" she said fiercely. "Ain't there any paper you can serve on a lawyer to shut him up—a conjunction, or something?"

"Injunction?" Mr. Wing smiled. "No, I guess there's nothing to stop him from talking."

"There's got to be," Maisie moaned then. "Listen —how long will their speeches take?"

"Oh, an hour—two—maybe, each."

"Well it's after four o'clock now. You go tell George to drag it out so they won't get to the speeches before tomorrow. Please."

"I don't see what good it will do."

"It don't do a fellow any good not to be hung till tomorrow, either," she stormed. "Only he's alive tonight. Please, Mr. Wing. You know, George ain't said a word, but I wasn't raised under canvas for nothing. Tigers don't give you warning when they're mad, and I ain't altogether ivory in the dome. If George gets licked he's going to can me proper, and I like my job."

"Oh, I hardly think so."

"I hardly think so, myself. I just gotta photo of it. Anyway, tell him to keep readin' outta that book while I think."

"All right, I'll tell him you said to."

"Don't you dare! He'd start arguin' this minute, for spite. Just you get him to do it yourself." She sped down the corridor and Mr. Wing went back inside.

Straight to the office of the presiding judge went Maisie, like a homing pigeon to its cote. He was in his chambers, and he was her friend!

"Say—" gasped Maisie. "Tell me, is there any way short of a muzzle that can stop a lawyer from talking?"

"Bless my soul—" said the Judge. "It's little Miss Sinclair."

"I admit it, you don't have to prove it," she grinned. "And in a whale of a hurry."

"Keep a lawyer from talking? If there is, I haven't heard of it. Why?" his eyes twinkled. Maisie told him. Before she was through with her story, he was sitting up very straight and his mouth was firm.

"Child," he said when she had finished. "I hope to live long enough to see you practicing law. It ought to be an education. The things you think of—" he pressed a buzzer, and to the attendant who answered he gave a direction. A moment later the man brought in a heavy volume. The judge leafed through it while Maisie watched the hands of her tiny wrist watch and prayed—perhaps to a tightrope walker's deity.

"Whatever made you think it could be done?" the judge asked, while he scanned the book's pages.

"I didn't. But you gotta try everything," she admitted. "Father used to say walkin' a rope couldn't be done by a rule. You had to try it out. And every time you walked it you used a different set o' muscles. If it was too loose you tightened it an' if it was too tight you slacked it a little. And George was out there on a rope he didn't know was going to bust—you had to bring him in some way."

The judge had written a few lines on a slip of paper, which, together with the huge tome he now delivered to her keeping. "Send that in to your young man," he said, kindly. "If he isn't too stubborn to try it, he will at least have had his chance. And Heaven forgive me—" he added softly. "Elmer Merriwether as good a friend as he is—I'll have to tell him—someday."

Thanks scattered after her flying feet, Maisie ran. It was twenty minutes to five. Was it too late? Or wasn't it? At the moment that she slid into the courtroom George turned to the judge and said "We rest."

To the bailiff's desk slid Maisie as on skates, and whispered to him a minute. Smiling, the bailiff took the book and the slip of paper and trod softly until he reached George. George had dropped into his chair for respite—and now—he was afraid. Terribly and cruelly afraid. Merriwether hadn't done anything so far, so it must mean that the worst was to come. Just then the bailiff handed him the book and

the note. George read it and passed it to Mr. Wing. They looked at one another.

"What would you do?" George whispered.

"I don't know how it could harm you—" Mr. Wing whispered back. "And she has the luck of the Irish!"

George read the words again—in a strange hand. And then underneath in M. St. Clair's unmistakeable hand—"Please do it. I gotta hunch." Lower down, in the corner—"If you don't, I'll quit!" And she had signed her name.

"She'd quit!" thought George. Quit. Quit!

But George was becoming superstitious. Also, he was afraid of dark roads and no maps. The judge, inspecting a document, looked up. "How long will you require for your arguments, gentlemen?" he asked.

George read the slip of paper and stood up.

"If it please the Court," he said, shakily and weak, and Maisie could hardly hear him for the beating of her heart. "The plaintiff begs to submit the case upon the evidence. We will not argue."

There was a pregnant silence. Elmer J. Merriwether, who had been idly leaning back in his swivel chair, became paralyzed. A pencil with which he was toying stopped in mid-air. Then his head, as in sudden mechanism, swung sharply that his vision might include George. His eyes started from his head. The judge on the bench repressed a smile. Whoever would

have thought, to look at this young lawyer, that he could deliver such a master-stroke!

"Well, Mr. Merriwether, what have you to say to that?" he asked. But he wanted to laugh.

"What is there to say?" returned the famous orator, with amazement.

"Very well. The Court will take the case under submission and render its judgment Friday at ten o'clock A. M." said the judge.

And George, with a sinking sensation, read again from the slip of paper:

> *When the evidence is concluded, unless the case is submitted to the jury on either side or both sides without argument, the plaintiff* must *commence and may conclude the argument.*

The underscoring was Maisie's, as was the added line:

> *This means if* you *don't, he* can't.

Still frightened at the chance he was taking, afraid of the consequences, George gathered up his papers to return to his offices. It might have comforted him if he could have seen one of the two men in the last row——

"That's what we get! Hire a man to talk—all the time overlooking the fact that some smart alec young whelp can keep him from talking! Who is that young sprig of a lawyer, anyway? Nobody ever lis-

tens to me but if they did I'd tell 'em that's the sort of fellow we ought to have working for us, to handle our business, not to have against us. We ought to have a lawyer, not a hypnotist."

The other seemed to have no reply.

Maisie wasn't at the office and the report was that she was ill. She didn't come to work Thursday. And Friday morning George went up to hear his verdict. But Maisie was there too, outside the door, with her ear at the crack of it.

When, however, after pinching himself to realize that the judge had really said "in favor of the plaintiff in the sum of thirty-one thousand six hundred dollars, together with her costs," his emotions were as nothing to those in the faithful breast in the hall. She felt that she should run and tell the presiding judge, but—later. Just now she had business to attend to.

When George walked into the office and gave his report, she howled: "My grief! Ain't that standing room only? Does that mean you get the money?"

"They gave notice of appeal—" he said. "But—er—well, Miss Snclair—er——"

Maisie became embarrassed too, and headed him off. "Mr. Wing," she yelled. "Yoo—hoo—c'mere—George got away with it." Neither she nor George noticed what she called him! "Licked 'em." That was the signal for six doors to open, all the sub-tenants interested. "Knocked Elmer J. Merriwether for a gool!"

With congratulations flooding him, George had no chance to say what he felt he must say. Only Mr. Wing, in on it, winked broadly at the elated Maisie—behind George's back.

When the riot had died and the rest had gone Mr. Wing said softly—"On the square, Miss Sinclair—" and they both laughed at the rhyme. "What put it into your head that Merriwether must be kept from his argument?"

"Oh, that," said Maisie nonchalantly. "Whoever heard of a lady who was satisfied to let the other fellow have the last word? It's the nature of wimmin to want it theirselves. Ain't that a scream—" she laughed.

"You'll always—get it—" said he sagely. "There's no question but that you should be preparing yourself for the practice of law." He spoke with conviction.

"My grandmother's cornbread—" howled Maisie then. "Whadda call what I'm doing now? Laugh that off."

With injured air she reached for her hat—and went to lunch. And George, whose ear was glued to the crack of the door inside his office, wondered if that wasn't the last word—what would be?

IX

AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOLIATH

GEORGE was not at all surprised at the conversation he heard over Maisie's desk that morning. One was likely to hear any sort of conversation at all over that desk. But he heard it, subconsciously.

"But you have a perfect camera face," a young man was saying. "It's foolish not to do this; you could make a million with your beauty."

"Yeah? Should I burst out weepin'?" Maisie responded most nonchalantly. "I know all about this face, young feller, havin' saw it for years in every kinda glass from the bevel-edge to the glurpy ones you see in boardin'-house bathrooms; and it ain't never brought me nothin' but grief. Movie stuff ain't my meat. Close-ups when you're good an' fade-outs when you ain't. Nope, not for M. St. Clair, as my bankbook reads. I don't have to worry about that face, or any new ones comin' along either, in this business. It's my brains I'm usin'. Laugh that off."

The young man evidently tried to do so.

"An' it's likely, ain't it," Maisie went on, "that by my handin' you thirty hard round iron men an' gettin' some pictures made that some director would

fall on his knobby knees an' beg me to accep' two thousand per! You copped the wrong baby when you picked me for a movie queen, boy. You run along an' sell your tickets to some dame that ain't on steady where she's at."

George resented that last sentence. And he sighed. But it seemed to be true. However, he had come to feel a sad resignation about it. But this was intriguing.

"What's this about the movies?" he asked, casually. "Are they offering you a starring contract? I hope you considered well before you refused."

"Don't you get lumbago from worry," she grinned back at him. "That bird has got a lovely graft, sellin' photo coupons with a ticket to enter the movies on the side. And that's about the way you'd enter—too. Not me. I wanta eat reg'lar. It ain't in the cards for me to succeed in the movies. I may be beautiful, but I ain't dumb!" This with natural modesty. George and Mr. Wing, who had just entered, choked back a laugh apiece.

And then the telephone rang. George wondered, afterwards, why he had not had a premonition at the sound. It was about time something happened. It had been days since Maisie pulled any fast ones of any kind. But he paid little attention to the conversation.

"Yep, this is Miss St. Clair," she said. "What's

that? Why—I ain't never done no such a thing! Say, whoever you are, I may not know where my next dollar is comin' from, me gettin' quite a few of them now and then from unexpected places, but I got this to say: I know what become o' the last couple o' them I gathered and I watch 'em till they're either buried or workin'. An' I ain't never sent a dollar out to work for me till it was mine. Get that! Don't you go kiddin' yourself that I shortchanged myself when I wrote that check! There's plenty in the bank to pay it an' ninety-three dollars an' seven cents left over after that, which will grow further after the first o' the month."

"You just check up them figures," she went on after listening a moment. "I'll bring over the old leather-bound book at noon an' let you cast a glim upon its well-spotted pages. An' I may charge you damages for insinuatin'—" she sputtered.

"Darn inquisitive worm—" she muttered. "Say, Mr. Dorsey, I'll take my lunch early today. I gotta go convince a guy I can read writin' an' that I write good readin'." She chuckled.

But there was no chuckle in evidence when she returned from lunch. In fact, she came back without having any lunch.

"Say—" she burst forth, romping into George's office. "Listen! Whadda you do when a guy asks you to cash a check for 'im an' you do and the check turns out to be applesauce?"

"Have him arrested," said George calmly. "That is, if he wrote the check."

"No, he didn't write it, just collected on it," Maisie explained. "No— it wasn't his own check. But it seems that it's mine, now, for a sooveneer. I got the check an' I ain't got the cash money. He has. I hope it chokes him."

"Do you think he knew the check wasn't good?" George asked then. He felt sorry for her, of course, but she could not have chosen a worse time to have troubles and to bring them to him. He was due in court at two o'clock and was going over his evidence.

"Oh, it was good, all right," she replied vaguely. "That's what makes me boil. It was good as long as *he* had it; it was only after I got it that it spoiled on me. To think of all the bonehead plays I hadda go make! It hadda to be today, when I went and bought me a half interest in a beauty parlor just yesterday, an' now the dame thinks I was tryin' to run a fast one on her because——"

"You bought a beauty parlor?" gasped George. What next? "Why——?"

"Why?" she laughed loudly. "Heaven help me, whadda you think these marcels cost per foot? Or per head would be better?" She grinned at her own joke. "I just got to the point where I was weary and wan from dealin' out dollar bills to keep me in the front row o' the great curled masses, an' so I invested a little slice o' my profits in a place so I

c'd get a quantity price. An' now they told the dame the check ain't no good."

"How much cash did you give—this friend?" he inquired. "Was it large, his check?"

"Large?" howled Maisie. "Well I ain't got no idea o' your notion o' large, but it was a mile wide an' three feet thick as far as I'm concerned. I cashed that bird's check for three hundred an' two dollars an' forty seven cents. An' don't call him my friend. He was one o' your clients—or was till the time to collect an' you turned that job over to Anderson across the suite."

George remembered the case now. The gentleman in question was being paid that sum to release his interest in property owned by his former wife, the amount representing moneys he had paid out for her during their married life, in property improvement. George, being busy at the time, had deputized young Anderson, across the suite, as Maisie had reminded him, to go with Risdon, the client, to get his money.

"And you cashed the check they gave him—" he mused. "What kind of a beauty parlor could you buy for that much money?"

"Well ain't he the interested looker-on," Maisie asked of the wide world. "Properly speakin' it wasn't no parlor, but a dame doin' marcelling. By means of that investment of mine she was goin' to open a two-by-twice and put the profits into a sack with

holes for two hands an' one of 'em mine. What I want now is my money back from that bum check an' how do I go about it?"

"Well, go down to the bank and get your check back, first. You say it was returned marked no funds?"

"I don't know anything about it. I only went down to see the dame I give my check to, an' proved to her that I thought I had the money, and then I phoned the bank an' they proved it to me that my bank account is short the amount o' that check I cashed."

George looked at his watch. It was perilously near time to go to court. "Well, go get your check," he said. "And we'll bring suit to get your money. What became of Risdon?"

"Why, didn't you know?" she raged. "He was leavin' that afternoon for Arizona and points beyond, to work in some mine. That's why he wanted the cash, to catch a train with. An' like a goop, I helped him make a getaway with my own dough. I oughtta be jailed," she snapped.

Maisie got madder by the minute, after George had left for the court. At last she took her hat and started for the bank where she kept her savings. A rather young, but extremely successful bank it was, the New Bank of Trust.

Once there she demanded the check which had caused the trouble. Only the day before had it been deposited, and what a lot of grief it had caused

already. "Stopped Payment" was stamped across the slip fastened to the check, and if Maisie had been mad before, she fermented now.

"Say," she said to the calm-eyed youth behind the teller's barred window; "how do I go about gettin' this money outta those sleight-of-hand artists?"

"Well, it's a cashier's check on the Pullman National," said the teller, with quickening pulse. This was a pretty girl and no mistake. Such eyes, gold-colored almost, but a little darker; tempting mouth, snappy little fur scarf around a white throat—wow!

"Where's that bank? And is a cashier's check any different from the kind I write?" she demanded.

"It's the same kind," he said, "except that your bank account is all there is behind your checks, and the entire bank is behind theirs. It astonished me that they should stop payment on a cashier's check." The youth smiled in friendly fashion. "That is, it would astonish me if it were any bank except the Pullman National. That bunch of mossbacks is liable to do anything."

"Wow—they musta fired you sometime," grinned the girl. "You ain't got any filyul love for 'em, I see."

"Fired me?" He took it up promptly, glad of any pretext for conversation with this girl. Those amberish eyes! "Say, where you been? Don't you read the newspapers? Owen Hammersmith is president of this bank, don't you know it? Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

"No, I don't go to Sunday school regular," said Maisie impudently. "What does it mean?" A grand duchesse manner came upon her, impishly. "I've so little time for mere newspapers with the responsibilities I got. A whole office on my shoulders. Go ahead. Wise me up. I understand English."

"Well, it's like this," he replied. "Owen Hammersmith, and he's a prince, let me tell you, used to be president of the Pullman National. Worked up to it from teller; and he's a *young* man now, too. He's made a record, I should think, with his early success in banking. Well, there were some mossback directors who had a grudge against him, maybe because he was so young—jealousy and all that—and they framed him. He and his wife were having a little trouble and he went fishing back up in the mountains. In fact one of the very fellows who was framing on him suggested the place for him to go; he was feeling all in you know, and while he was gone his wife sued him for divorce."

"Oh I remember that, a year ago," said Maisie. "I always read the nice lines under the pictures." She grinned.

"Well then you remember the Pullman National threw Mr. Hammersmith out, while he was away up the back country and didn't know anything about it. It was a raw deal all the way 'round."

"So, that's the bird that started this bank," Maisie mused. "Well under the surrounding coincidences I think he's the bird I chatter with next. Is

that his office behind that extra-shiny door? Thanks a lot. You're a wonderful help to me, dearie." She threw the last back over her shoulder, leaving a slightly apoplectic teller behind her.

She was interrupted in her progress by a trim miss who started up from behind a typewriter desk on the other side of that "extra-shiny" door. "Yes?" she said, with rising inflection.

"Asolutely," said Maisie firmly. "Is he in there?"

"Did you wish to see Mr. Hammersmith?" the other asked defensively.

"Well now, you're a regular medium, aren't you?" returned Maisie.

"Have you an ap-pointment?" stammered the girl, loyalty to her employer keeping her from flight. She evidently believed she was about to be attacked.

"Say, I never had to make any appointment to put my money in this bank and I'm too rushed for time to tell you my troubles. Just tell him—no, you point him out and call it a day. And make it snappy."

"But—may I take your name in?"

"With me attached. Here, dearie, don't be afraid to turn the knob. It won't bite and if it does I been bit before. That's what I'm here about. Go ahead and tell him Miss St. Clair is here an' save your job."

The girl went inside but when she would have closed the door a trim foot was halfway through it. And Maisie was attached to the foot.

"Oh, howdo, Mr. Hammersmith," she said brightly.

"I recognize you from your pictures in the papers last year. All right, girlie, you can leave us now. I ain't got a bomb with me, nor nothin' but a grouch. Say, Mr. Hammersmith, that Pullman National has done me dirt and I reckon you're the boy to square it for me."

"What's that?"

It was an effect Maisie seemed to have on people. They started to stutter and stare as soon as she addressed them.

"Well can you imagine a bank stopping payment on a check on a person it wasn't made to?" she demanded. "I cashed a check for a fellow which this Pullman National gave him and now they won't pay it, an' it's their own."

"Let me see the check," said the bank president. "A cashier's check—Pullman National! H'm—you say they stopped payment on this? Miss—what is the name?"

"Why, I'm M. St. Clair, one o' your heavy depositors. An' that's a good line when a little over a year ago I was lucky to be eatin'. Now the old bank-roll grows by leaps and bounds, what with profit on sublettin' the office and dividends on some restaurant stock—an' believe me it pays, bein' run by some Greek friends of mine."

"I'm glad to meet you, Miss St. Clair, and glad you are one of us," murmured the dignitary.

"Not too heavy a accent on that *St.*" Maisie

grinned. "George doesn't crave it. To make it easier for him I call it *Sin.*"

"And who is George?" he asked, still eyeing the check.

"Why, ain't you ever heard o' George Dorsey, attorney-at-law? He's one o' the brightest legal lights we got turned on."

"Yes?" Mr. Hammersmith was evidently wondering about that as he stared at the check hypnotized. "What did he tell you to do about this check?"

"He said for me to have them arrested," she confided. "But he ain't seen the check yet."

"I can't understand payment being stopped on a cashier's check," he said then. "Why, this is currency, practically. Have they given any reason?"

"They ain't had no chance," avowed Maisie. "I can't be bothered by reasons. I can't buy no beauty parlors with reasons. I want cash."

"Suppose you telephone them from here and find out the reason," he suggested.

"All right, if you think reasons are worth anything. But it's money I'm after."

"I'll get the money for you," the banker promised.

There was something turning over and over in the mind of the man who had been ousted from the presidency of the Pullman National, with no real reason for that action. Presently, when Maisie had hung up the receiver after her conversation, he seemed to have settled something with himself.

"They said the bird they gave this check to shoulda signed some kinda deed that's in their escrow department, and that's why they stopped it. They said it never shoulda been give out till it was signed. And that makes me a traffic cop standin' on a button with both arms out, I reckon, as that bird was leavin' for parts unknown and unnecessary yesterday afternoon, leavin' me holdin' the sack."

"You'll get your money," said he again. "You'll have to sue and attach." And he looked at his watch in businesslike fashion.

"Sure, that's easy. What else?"

"What else?" the banker demanded. "What else can you want? Do you realize, young lady—" and his eyes twinkled for the first time, "that attaching a whole bank for one of their own checks means closing its doors with a sheriff standing on guard? That's about the worst thing you could do to a bank."

"Is it?" asked Maisie, innocently. "I reckon that'll be good for their business, no?"

Was there a wicked gleam in that amber eye? He wasn't sure.

"Will you have time to prepare and file that suit this afternoon?" he asked casually. "So it can be served early tomorrow morning when they open?"

"I'll say I will," she said with conviction. "Any other little thing you can think of? Just mention it."

"That will be sufficient," he said grimly. The

Pullman National had ousted its president, its young and efficient president, hadn't it? While he was out of communication with the outside world, too. And he had got backing and started this bank, hadn't he? And now, to the damage of one of his depositors they had stopped payment on a check against an innocent third party—his mouth grew more grim. Yes, that would be sufficient.

"You go back to the office and have your employer dictate that suit," he directed. "File it and have it served on the Pullman National at ten tomorrow morning when they open their doors."

"Righto—" grinned Maisie. "And I wish I could find some way to make 'em pay me interest on that three hundred and two dollars and forty-seven cents."

"Three hundred and two—" he smiled. "You know, it was that extra two dollars that makes it possible to do this? Under our laws, three hundred dollars would not have closed the bank, or if at all, not easily."

"Praise be for the two," she cried, laughing. "Well I'm off in a cloud of dust." And the banker called a number and talked to his own attorney. "Yes, I thought of that—" he said once.

After a while Hammersmith called for the files of a certain banking matter and with them before him he telephoned the Pullman National and asked for the president. Informed that the official was in Coronado on vacation, he asked for the vice president and conversed with him long and heatedly.

"But, Hammersmith," the other was saying. "I thought we were not going to take up that matter until Mr. Appleby returns from his trip."

"I didn't promise to let it rest," said Hammersmith formally. "I want this conference at ten in the morning, and I want every one at your bank who has a voice in the matter to be there for that conference. Including the cashier—" he said as an afterthought.

Mr. Hammersmith was making sure that he would know the whereabouts of all the important officers of the Pullman National at ten o'clock. For the reason that any authorized officer of the bank, served with attachment papers, could tender the sheriff the amount of money called for and save the bank from being closed. But the new and young assistant cashier of the Pullman National would not know, or avail himself of this "out." Hammersmith counted on that.

Maisie never knew, as she blithely tapped the keys, filling out attachment blanks, what wheels she had started turning. She didn't ask George to dictate the suit for he wasn't there. He was in court. But there were plenty of attachment suits lying around which she could copy, filling in the blanks to suit her own needs, in what she thought was a highly creditable manner.

There was one stumbling block. The matter of the bond. One person attaching the property of another has to indemnify the other in case the suit should fail. That Maisie's suit could not fail was ob-

vious. She had innocently exchanged real money for a cashier's check which should be as good as gold coin; in this case, it hadn't been, but Maisie should not, according to law, be made to suffer through the bank's negligence. If they had given out the check before they required a necessary signature, that was their fault and not Maisie's. That was the case, according to Mr. Hammersmith. Cut and dried.

Maisie, however, had not thought about any bond. She knew there had to be one; George often had to ask one or two friends to sign for a client. MacDonald, the amiable deputy in the county clerk's office, might sign hers. And George was somewhere at the courthouse. He might sign it. So she hied herself to the courthouse to file the suit.

"Hello, Nunc," said MacDonald. "Where you been lately?"

"I s'pose it's so dark and gloomy up here you can't see unless I bring in the sunshine," Maisie retorted.

"I been wanting to run for mayor," he jibed. "How would you like to handle my campaign?"

"Slap the 'Filed' sign on this and kid me later," grinned Maisie. He did as requested, and then his eyes grew round. "Say—" he whistled——.

"What are you doing? Attaching a bank? This must be a mistake."

"It is, a whole whale of a mistake, an' they're going to know it by morning. M. St. Clair, that's me, the party who has been done dirt. And the Pull-

man National, that's them, the birds which done it. And I rise to remark that I'm cert'ny going to be on hand to see the fur fly. Slip it through, boy, and let's get going."

"A bank! That will mean closing their doors—my stars, girl, you have a mean disposition." He grinned as he said it. "I'm glad I never did anything mean to you. But say—there will be a huge bond on this. A bank—that will mean about a five thousand dollars bond——"

"My uncle's lumbago—you mean you're going to stick me five thousand dollars to collect a measly three hundred? Which they held out on me in the first place? Say, boy, if I had five thousand I'd have me a beauty parlor as is, and not be buying a one-chair little wonder. I wouldn't even need the darn three hundred."

"I'm sorry," said the deputy comfortingly. "But that's the size they'd want to attach. Where were you going to get your bond?"

"Well I thought—" and then Maisie got bashful. "Mr. Dorsey—or—you or someone——"

"They wouldn't take me, or Mr. Dorsey either, I'm afraid. You had better get a bonding company."

"Atta boy—" said Maisie admiringly. "How do I get 'em? You got brains."

"There's an insurance firm just across the street," said MacDonald. "They do a lot of bonding—and I've got time to run over there with you."

But the insurance company was dubious. "Against

a bank—" he said. "I'm afraid you will have to furnish me with a financial statement——"

"Say, friend," she interrupted the astonished agent, "you use that telephone on your desk and call up the New Bank of Trust. Ask for the president, Mr. Hammersmith. He's a friend o' mine. Tell him your troubles an' that you ain't sure I ain't a bandit or something and then listen hard. You'll get a earful."

The insurance man gulped, looked at MacDonald who was in his customary trance superinduced by Maisie, and started for the inner office. He seemed to wish to talk to the bank privately.

In a brief time he returned, a queer look on his face. And he made out the bond and had it typed, signing it as special agent. He told Maisie they would send her a bill.

"That's simple," she remarked, as they left. "I wish they'd gimme something hard now and then. I'm getting stale."

MacDonald ducked his face away and waved a hand to Maisie, heading for the sheriff's office.

"Boy, howdy," she greeted a sheriff's office employee. "I want one o' your most fearless and handsome permotors of the law to accomp'ny me on a little joyride tomorrow at not later than five minutes to ten. With a shiny star and a well oiled popgun on his hip, an' I'll lay you six to two that we'll be the first to hold up a bank and not get bumped for it! Got any loose money to take me up with?"

"What's all this?" asked the jovial and rotund one. Then he read the attachment papers, and then he whistled.

"Attaching the Pullman National!" he moaned. "And for three hundred and two dollars—goodnight! What a world!" But aloud he said: "Yes miss, we'll have a man on the job at ten o'clock."

"You might notify the mourners, in case you forget it," she laughed.

"We won't forget," he promised gravely.

Maisie decided not to be there. It would be better to be in her own office when they came to pay the check. Calling Mr. Hammersmith she reported progress and then went home. George hadn't shown up.

Likewise the next morning, when she wanted to tell him about the fun, he was late and had to run for the courthouse, his trial being continued from the previous day. But when he returned at noon, he already knew, and to say that George wasn't pleased was putting it mildly.

"Miss Snclair!" he shouted. "What do you mean? Have you seen the noon editions of the paper?"

"Have I seen 'em?" she crowed. "Boy, I wrote 'em. Ain't it a pip?"

"Pip!" groaned George. "Well that would not be my name for it, Miss Snclair. I would call it an outrage. Whatever possessed you? And where did you get your idea to close a big, substantial institution like the Pullman National for an insignificant sum like three hundred and two dollars? Then tell-

ing it in that comic fashion—" bitterly—"that you were in Attorney Dorsey's office? Saying you were my prime minister? It makes me a laughing stock."

"That was kinda simple of the bird that interviewed me right after the Pullman National was up to pay me the money," she said calmly, "and to get a release so the bank could open! But you c'n believe it or not, I never said it. I mighta said——"

"You no doubt did—" he stormed.

"That I was your right hand—or——"

"And you might have said that the left hand never knew what you were doing—" he raged.

"Well didn't you say for me to have 'em arrested?" she howled back at him. "That was as near to it as I could come. But I got my money."

"At my expense—" George chimed in. "How long is this to go on, Miss Snclair? Every time I take my attention away are you going to do something that will bring shame and ridicule upon me?"

"Oh I wouldn't worry about that," she returned nonchalantly. "I guess just because their old bank was closed for twenty minutes ain't going to nick your account there any. But if I was you, I'd change over to the New Bank of Trust. An' that thing in the papers ain't going to hurt you none. Half an hour after it was out three perfeck strangers called up to see would you attach a bank out in Scribbons Addition that had been holdin' a thousand o' theirs for a month——

"And—" she continued with emphasis, "as for

any other part o' this that's worrying you, you should be a ostrich so you c'd put your head in the sand and couldn't see trouble so far away. But you really missed something not being here when the cashier of the Pullman Bank and his lawyer came up to hand me my three hundred and two——"

"To *my* office—" moaned George. "And for a small sum like that——"

"They says something like that," she went on. "An' I says, not being scared of them since they owed me money—'the bigger they are the harder they fall.' And the lawyer says who wouldda believed a young girl should do that to a bank and I says David was a little guy and only had a little rock but it turned the trick on that guy Golightly or whatever his name was—an' they paid me an' left, kinda red."

George choked back bitter words then. But she went on:

"I felt sorry they canned the assistant cashier, who didn't know he could pay the money and keep the bank open, but Mr. Hammersmith—he's a friend o' mine—" she smiled charmingly "the president of the New Bank o' Trust—he's goin' to put him to work for him the first o' the week. He'll be up thankin' me for that yet, wait and see." George went toward his office. But Maisie was started and the tide would not be stemmed.

"That wasn't a bad line about David and the rock —was it?" she caroled. "It just hit me sudden—the line, not the rock. An', Mr. Dorsey, Mr. Hammer-

smith asked me what kinda practice you had, an' he's comin' up to offer me his per'snal congratulations after while, an' he wants to meetcha. An' if I was you I'd have my hair slicked an' my desk full of books and look busy, as I ain't lost no chance to tell him what a smart lawyer you are. And with him ownin' a bank o' his own—you might get to be a bank attorney yet, who sabes? Us young good-lookers gotto stick together. An' he's already strong for this part o' the firm. Laugh that off!"

But George couldn't.

X

BURSTING THE BARS

ON his way to the office George was reflecting that there had to be some outlet for his feelings; not that he was wondering whether Maisie might be removed from the office. That seemed out of the question; luck was her mantle and her sandals were shod with protection. But he felt that he must have some relief, temporary if not permanent. And he had decided upon a vacation.

He had no trials on the calendar for the next few weeks, and could take one now as well as later. Maisie had demonstrated that she was amply capable to look after things during his absence. His mouth was all ready to say the fatal words when he reached the office. So it was a shock when Maisie's morning greeting to him was:

"Hello and goodbye, Mister Dorsey. I'm going to break it to you easy, as Witwer says so touchingly. I'm gone, long gone. I been chained an' anchored to the floor so blooming long that I think I'm growin' barnacles, so I went an' hired me a Queen o' the May to dance around this here maypole while I'm hittin' the trail. Is it all right?"

"Why—Miss Snclair—" George gasped, running true to form. Under direct fire from Maisie's guns one always gasped.

"O' course if you ain't satisfied I should blow, I'll cancel the bookin's but it ain't in the cards for a St. Clair to follow one tent show year in an' year out, an' intimidation breeds contempt o' court, as our smartest lawyers say. Father always changed his shows every spring, and when it gets green and smelly, I think o' the sawdust an' I gotta git out and go. I done pretty well to work through last year without no vacation except such as I got dodgin' steam at the vegetable tables, an' I got a classy trip all planned. I got a demmysella hired to answer telephones and run errands an' Miss Kellogg's going to take dictation for you. 'Course she don't understand your clients like I do, but she'll struggle along while I'm gone. I hope you're contented with the idear."

Contented with the idea was mild. George was charmed with it. Even though it meant the postponement of his own little vacation, it had its compensations. For when Maisie returned from her trip, he would take his, making two marvelous separations. What a rest for him! An atmosphere entirely free from Maisie for a whole month! And while he blushed inwardly at the deservedness of the sly little dig about the girl's having had no vacation last year, he agreed that she had one coming now. It was quite true that he had not thought of giving her one last

year, for the reason that he had been so busy trying to get rid of her permanently that he hadn't thought of a temporary relief.

Welcome indeed would be the flawless services of Miss Kellogg, the maiden dedicated to the service of the five sub-tenants.

"Well Miss Snclair," he said, trying to keep his enthusiasm out of his voice. "This is a co-incidence. All the way down I'd been thinking of giving you a vacation now, on salary of course."

"That's right handsome of you," she beamed. "I been plannin' this Catalina trip for quite some moons. I always wanted to see the glass-bottom boats. So I'll be plannin' to leave as soon as I get the new spare part hooked up and runnin'."

Which was soon. After a day of instruction Maisie felt that the substitute, while sufficiently able to fill the bill, would not be at all dangerous to Maisie's position. There was little likelihood that she could supplant the regular incumbent, so after a few pungent words on the subject to Mr. Wing, she was ready.

"She doesn't seem too easy to instruct—" he had said, watching.

"You never expected no answer to that, Mr. Wing, but you'll get one, you're such a understanding guy. I may be dumb, but I ain't so absoblamelutely blank. Use your noodle! I've raised this job careful from a pup an' I ain't takin' no chance o' its going sour on me. I may not be the cream o' the

stenog'fy business, but there is folks that is used to skim milk in their coffee, so it ain't sense to push the cream pitcher out for a sample, now is it? Or the skim milk might get—canned!" she guffawed at a gasping Mr. Wing.

"Well, I hope you make a week-end at Catalina; it's the chanct o' a lifetime to see me playing the part o' the grand duchesse. I got a line o' wardrobe that's been collected from all points south o' Siberia, and what high life I don't see in the next two weeks'll hafto wiggle along without me for another year."

George was downright cordial when she left. "I hope you have a pleasant trip, Miss Snclair," he said. "At Catalina."

"I'm going to do that island thorough," she answered gaily. "Take it from me I'm going to give the place a treat. I'll have 'em tightenin' up the bolts and pullin' the guy-ropes into place when I'm gone, I'll remark in print the size of a three-sheet. They'll think a strong wind has blew in when I sashay into view. I gotta bathing suit which is built after lines the human eye couldn't believe possible——"

Early next morning, that being Sunday, after an early breakfast at the corner soda fountain—the breakfast consisting of a caramel sundae and ginger snaps—Maisie sent a few postcards from the same drug store; views from Catalina with "Some vacation!" "Swell place, wish you were here—" to George and Mr. Wing. Might as well start right. And then

she walked straight into a coma brought on by the sight of a shiny new coupé, blue-curtained, of the common or bakery variety—the kind that is turned out by the baker's dozen, that is, and similarly priced.

Practically rolling in wealth, that is for a St. Clair, with an income accruing from the subletting of the suite, a healthy salary, money coming from the restaurant stock, and a half-interest in a beauty parlor which had started with one chair and now threatened to become a healthily paying business, she was content with the world. But this long time she had been thinking that one of those agile fender-fighters was vastly suitable to her needs and position, and now, on this Sunday morning, just as she was about to embark on a high class vacation with wardrobe to match, along came opportunity.

" 'Lo, Jimmy," said a heavily marcelled and powdered lady of the 1927 model, sliding onto a stool alongside the soda fountain corner. "Don't know anyone that wants to buy my swell coop, do you? Gotta swell buy for someone."

"What's wrong with it?" asked the sheik behind the counter.

"Not a blame thing. It's me that's jimmed, not the leaping tuna," said the lady. "I gotta tough line handed out to me by the new lady judge in this democratic village, yesterday morning. She says I better not be caught drivin' again for a year or so, on account of that little misunderstanding I had

with the nurse and baby carriage at Alvarado and Seventh last week. How was I to know that the woman was going to get glued to the pavement to wipe the infant's chin just as I rounded the corner? I didn't hurt the infant none, but the nurse was some sprained and serves her right. However, I haven't no use for a car and I might's well sell it as pay storage and get me another one a year from now."

"I hope you'll pawdon me—" Maisie interrupted. "But I overheard your conversation." Coming from the next stool this was not without its touch of surprise. "Was it the car sitting in front that you wished to dispose with?"

"None other," returned the languid lady. "Buy of a lifetime."

"I might look at it," said Maisie promptly. She had never lost anything yet by seizing an opportunity. As witness the real estate deal and the beauty parlor—and that gave her another idea.

"You wasn't by any chance in the beauty business, was you?" she asked as they walked to the curb.

"You said it," gasped the other. "How'd you guess it?"

"I guess it was because you're in such perfeck shape yourself." Maisie didn't mention the fact that she had read the papers and knew about the baby carriage case, knew also that the coupé in that case was driven by a manicurist in a barber shop!

If her answer didn't bring the price down, it didn't send it up any, and it wasn't more than ten minutes

later that Maisie St. Clair stood possessed of one blue coupé with curtains at its tiny windows and a bud-vase with a rose in it. It might have been the rose that turned the trick.

Thirty minutes later the former owner pronounced Maisie an expert in driving and said "let's go." And Maisie slid into position at the curb of her modest hotel and blithely went inside, accompanied by the beauty expert.

"Now," she said bravely. "I'll trade you a half interest in my beauty parlor, a regular honest-to-William joint; was one chair until it took on weight an' now it's got three and about to present its proud parents with a fourth. Reg'lar marcellin', two apprentices workin' on half-pay, mud packs, an' everything. I staked a damsel which wished to go on her own and the thing plumb pesters me with profits when I might be learnin' law like I should. I made my money back an' more already, and the partition's been knocked out an' set over twict. Wanta see it? I'll call up my partner and see if it's jake with her. You could take charge o' the manicure tables an' all that——"

It being "jake" the deal was closed, except for one small paper which finally ended the dickering, a small paper which entitled the said Maisie St. Clair to credit of healthy proportions in the said beauty parlor, to be taken out in trade. Free marcels and manicures for a year, and a car to ride in! Maisie crowed to herself.

Then she remembered! She should have taken the eight-forty electric boat-train to Catalina. But she couldn't drive a car to Catalina Island, and the owner of a blue coop has to drive it! Farewell, Catalina. You may never know what you missed. The smart thing to do was tour, and tour in your own car. With her bag in hand,—Maisie started out, preferably for Yosemite Valley, and the wide roads that beckon. That is, she started for the curb, where she had left Arthur—such was the coop's name, the previous owner had said—but there was no sprightly perambulator in sight! Arthur was not. Not anywhere. Maisie had known at once that Arthur was intelligent, but she hadn't felt that he had taken any dislike to her; in fact she thought Arthur was rather pleased than otherwise. Why, then, should he desert her now?

Arthur had, however, departed, leaving but an empty curb where he had stood, champing his bit.

"My bus's been stole," shouted Maisie, running back into the hotel. "Almost before I had it! What'll I do now?"

"Notify the police, quick. There's a million o' those crossing cloggers all over town," advised the clerk. "Have you the license number?"

When the police heard the make of the car they seemed to lose interest, but they took the license number which Maisie had on the slip of paper from the former owner, which Maisie was going to take into the Motor Vehicle department as she drove

through Sacramento, to get the certificate of ownership changed. The lady had explained that would be quicker than writing about it.

Having reported the theft there was nothing to do except await Arthur's return, which Maisie never doubted. Policemen were always so polite to her. She had even seen the crossing cop by the Mackinaw Building nab a stolen car at his corner. She might even go to the police station to wait. So she walked to the corner for a trolley, and oh—the wonder of it. Half a block away, right by the curb, stood Arthur. As meek as ever, with his blue curtains intact and the rose still in his bud vase! *And* there was a ticket tied to Arthur's wheel.

She climbed in, took off the tag and stepped on the starter. The ticket said "Illegal Parking," but that meant nothing in Maisie's young life, so she threw it away. Arthur leaped to the fray and they were off, to the wide roads that beckon.

Having been a mere foot passenger of the arteries of the city until now, she felt some apprehension as to roads, but after a little she saw a stage which had a sign "Bakersfield-Sacramento" on it, and as that was where she wanted to go, she followed it, to the occasional astonishment of motorists who had thought those things wouldn't do more than thirty per!

Through traffic like a worm, clinging to the tail light of that stage, using that vehicle as a buffer, she threaded her way across the city and out upon the

highways, past little rolling subdivisions which informed the world this was the only spot to settle in—and for. Almost magically she missed disaster, exulting in her control of this monster—Maisiecally speaking—of power and speed. And then, several hours away, came hunger, and with it—tragedy.

Coming out of the Home of the Green Apple Pie, in Palmdale, a ninety-by-ninety-two village, she found the village constable of fiction comparing the license plates on her car with a slip of paper he carried. His very chin whiskers waggled with delight. He was in an ecstasy of anticipation.

"Yes, ossifer, it's real," Maisie informed him jovially. "Hand-painted curtains an' everything. Ain't it a lulu? All to the horse-radish. I don't blame you for takin' a extra squint at 'im. It ain't every day you get a eyeful like that!"

"Don't get flip, young woman," said the constable.

"Flip is just what I got most of at the present time," the girl grinned impudently. "For the first time into nigh on two heartbreakin' years I ain't got a chair under me which is tied to a floor, sittin' still. I'm towering, brother, towering!"

"Not no more you ain't, heh, heh!" cackled the constable, quivering with importance and his own joke. "Not onless you'd call it towering when the regular depittys come for you."

"What're you yellin' about?" demanded Maisie. "Have I parked on the wrong side o' your two-foot street or is it the curtains you ain't strong for?"

"Don't try any of your fast city talk on me," warned the officer. "Fer it don't get you nothing. They's been several tried it before. I ain't got no time to waste on criminals except to lock 'em up. They can do their talkin' between the bars after I've gone about my other business."

"Whadda you mean, criminals?" she howled. "Say, I'm a darn good criminal lawyer myself if information is what you're after."

"Well try an' get yourself out of jail then," he retorted. "Guess I better take that bag, too, it looks like it might be stolen."

"Stolen——"

"You needn't try to let on you're innercent," blustered the old man. "This here car's stole, an' you stole it! Why, they broadcasted them numbers not more'n an hour ago. It ain't such a large world as it used ter be. This here radio's just the ticker for catchin' bandits."

"I never stole that car—I own it! I just bought it—ooooomph!" Maisie had just remembered the trifling incident of Arthur's departure some three or four hours ago. She had plumb forgotten to mention finding him! But that would be easy.

"Oh, that—" she said breezily. "I nearly forgot. That was me he was stolen from. But he wasn't stolen at all, just moved away from where I'd left him and when I found him I forgot to call back an' tell them about it."

"Well next time you can remember." The constable was firm. "What might your name be?"

"M. St. Clair," said Maisie easily.

"I reckon that's why the name on the owner's tag up inside is Clarice Schmidt."

Maisie had not peered up under the dashboard, had not seen the little printed square, and now it came back to her that Miss Schmidt had said that until she got her registration changed at Sacramento she could say that was her name.

"I was saying—" she continued as if interrupted. "M. St. Clair sold me this car this morning an' my name's Schmidt." She smiled.

"Be that as it may," said the constable in a dark tone, "you'll rest just as quiet Schmidt as you would St. Clair. That tag is dated three months back."

"Oh, I can explain that—" she thought desperately.

"Do yer explainin' to the jestice," said he with finality.

With a firm grasp on her arm he dragged her across the road and around the side of the eating house which she had just quitted. "Jail's right handy," he jibed. "Right back o' the lunch counter. Makes it easy to carry meals in."

"You're not putting me in jail!" gasped Maisie. "Why honest, you old nitwit, you're layin' yourself out an' orderin' flowers! You ain't got no idea who I am! Every judge in Los Angeles knows me."

"I ain't got a doubt of it," he caekled. With that he unlocked a padlock on a small shack made of corrugated iron, and led her inside; slid a rasping slide back in a rusted groove, revealing the one opening, a barred window.

"Here's yer hotel, now, tower to yer heart's content," he taunted her and with a quick movement he was outside and had slammed the door. "Nitwit?" he said severely, coming around to the barred window: "Young lady, when you do any more shoplifting, you stay in the city limits with yer loot. They mebbe don't catch much there, bein' too busy shining up their stars, but out here we got a respeck for law that's another thing again." He walked away, carrying Maisie's bag.

"Hey you," she howled. "Yer doin' a little shoplifting yourself, an' where you goin' with that bag? It's mine."

"With them initials?" he replied. It was unfortunate, Maisie reflected, that she had bought that bag at a second-hand auction and neglected to change the letters on its side.

"I can prove it's mine," she boomed. "I'll have you arrested."

"Who you going to get to do it?" was his parting shot. "And which does GGW stand for, St. Clair, or Schmidt?" And he was gone.

"Well if this ain't rich," Maisie moaned. She was not daunted at all; only mad. "Me in the clink for stealin' my own auto*mo*bile which I ain't stole an'

can't prove it! If I only hadn't got hot, an' hadda explained ladylike that I was savin' time by goin' to Sacramento to get that thing changed—but no—bein' the daughter of my father, I hadda lie! Now whadda I do? When he comes back——"

But it was Monday when he came. Part of the night Maisie had spent sleeping the sleep of the innocent, but the rest of the time she had walked the floor of the shack rehearsing the biting speeches which she would use to burn up that old ten-twenty-thirty make-up when she got out, and incidentally praying for company. A stray cat had been the only answer to her prayers.

Breakfast, Monday, was delivered through the barred window; the bars were generously wide apart, in fact she had wondered if she might not be able to twist through them sideways, the only trouble being that there was no one to lift, or start sliding her,

"Say, you," she greeted her jailor as he appeared with coffee and what looked like an egg sandwich. "How long you going to keep up this foolishness?"

"You'll get jestice soon enough," he crowed. "An' the next bars you're behind may be closer together."

"Notified the author'ties yet?" she demanded.

"Not yet. Yesterday was Sunday. I'll telephone 'em today."

"Oh, you got telephones out here?"

"We got more than that. We got brains enough to catch burglars," he chastened her.

With lunch he said he had told the city police that

he had found the thief and the car. "An' they said the car was stole from that St. Clair you said sold it to you," he said righteously. "You hadda nerve to tell me who the real owner was."

"You'd be surprised," Maisie laughed then.

"So'll you," he laughed in return. "You forged that registration card, I guess, Miss Schmidt. Forgery's pretty nigh as bad's stealin'."

"That ain't worryin' me," Maisie tossed her head.

"Maybe this will," said her captor. "I und'stand last Saturday you had your driver's license revoked for a year! That's why you ain't got it with you."

Maisie bit her tongue. There was where she had tripped. Traded her perfectly good beauty parlor for something that was out of commission. Not meaning the Car! She swallowed rapidly.

"Oh well," she dared to say. "I don't care. I ain't Schmidt."

"Ain't Schmidt?" the constable stood amazed. "Well I heard tell o' al-*i*-ases, but not so many in a flock. Go ahead and think up another one. Get a funny one this time. I c'n hold you fer drivin' without a license no matter what you call yourself. An' if you're Schmidt, I got you for that. An' if you ain't, I got you anyway."

It was nearly dusk when Maisie saw the car—Arthur—come around the corner and slow down. Hope rose, and then Arthur moved on, toward the open country. It was near midnight when her vigil

was rewarded by seeing him come limping in again and turn in at the garage down the road.

And the next day was Tuesday.

The meals were regular, at least. After that lunch on Monday they had been handed through the bars by a waiter from the restaurant, who was strangely averse to conversation, but Tuesday's lunch came by personal delivery again.

"Say—" she demanded hotly of the constable who stood outside, just out of reach. "What's my car doing running around the country?"

"Your car?" he grinned. "I guess not. An' it ain't doin' no worse than it was when you brought it this far."

"You're rentin' it—" she accused, suddenly. He flushed.

"Got to make the county's board money out of the prisoners," he said with dignity.

"You graftin' old skate!" she howled at that. "You can't keep a party in jail like this."

"I'm a doing it—" he responded, making off.

"When are the officers coming for me?" she yelled after him.

"Stop worrying, they won't treat you no nicer than I am," he called over his shoulder, plodding on. "You'll be taken over to the jestice this morning, likely. He'll tend to you as soon as he's done with the morning trade. He runs the feed yard."

It was a long list of crimes she heard read off when she finally was brought before the tribunal.

Theft, highway robbery, driving without a license, resisting an officer, forgery, they were only a beginning it seemed.

"Got any bail on you?" demanded the feed-merchant justice of the peace.

"Plenty—" retorted the prisoner, nonchalantly. Diving into her stocking she brought out a roll. "Cast a glim on that an' see if it don't give you a thrill. Bet ten dollars cash you ain't got that much yourself. An' there's more where that come from. Cash is one thing that sings a alto to any tune you start an' is harmonious to the itchin' palm—which is the name o' this town, I take it."

"That ain't too much—" said the justice, ignoring her tirade. "Let's see; here's Jane-Doe-St.-Clair-Schmidt; driving with a suspended license you ain't got; stealin' a car; forgin' a certificate; swearing at and resisting an officer; violatin' a city ordinance on parkin' and—we better make it a couple of thousand——"

"Thousand—" sputtered Maisie.

"You ain't got that much along?" grinned the justice.

"Well I know where that much is—" she asserted at that. "My grief, boy, was you playin' a saxophone in a jazz band what a wow you'd be. Every note you open up is blue."

"Will you deposit this on your bail?" he reached for the money.

"Not by a jugful," howled Maisie, reaching

faster. "You get George Dorsey on the phone, Attorney-at-Law, and he'll settle all accounts."

After a parley the justice and the constable agreed to do this, and time passed quicker then. In fact it didn't seem any later than Christmas when central reported that she had Dorsey on the wire. How Maisie thrilled at the sound coming over the wire. George! Her troubles were over! The constable was explaining that a criminal out here—"Schmidt" he was saying when she interrupted.

"Schmidt your uncle's grandmother—" she squealed. "St. Clair. M. St. Clair. I work for him."

The constable turned upon her a six-day-dead fish eye.

"So, you ain't thought up any new ones, but you're St. Clair now."

"Never you mind, you just tell him—here, let me talk to him."

"No you don't," he said with dignity. "I'll do the talkin'." He eyed her sharply. "These here codes don't go in this court."

"Court—you mean feed-yard—" snickered Maisie. "Well you tell him St—no I mean Sinclair."

"Oh, it's *Sin*clair now!" His stupidity was maddening.

"There's a woman here who stole a car and she says she's Sinclair and that the car was stolen from her, and she's Schmidt, and St. Clair sold it to her, and it's a stolen car and she has no license——"

Maisie could hear crisp tones over the wire then.

"Why this is the constable out at Palmdale, seventy miles north of the city. She's in jail out here." After a moment he turned with triumph. "He says it ain't you—" he said placidly. "That Miss Sinclair is at Catalina for two weeks, and he had a postcard from her this morning." Those cursed cards, sent from the drug store! "And he says Miss Sinclair don't own a car and never did." He listened again. And then he hung up. "And he says you couldn't be her, as the jail ain't built that could hold her for two days."

"Is that so?" replied Maisie airily. So, that was what George thought!

"You get the Ponsay Dayly Own Beauty Parlor on the phone and ask for Miss Schmidt—the number is——"

"What for?"

"'Cause I've spent enough time out here. I know if I stay any longer I'll grow a bone head too and I don't dare risk it. My business is too ticknickle. You get 'em—pronto——"

Something in her manner made the constable think this might be Miss Sinclair after all, from Mr. Dorsey's description. He got the number.

He did, looking somewhat crestfallen.

"Now you ask her why she sold her car." He did. The information seemed to stun him.

"Now you ask who to?"

"Look here——"

"Don't answer me back," Maisie cut in briskly. "I

spend most o' my time gettin' folks outta trouble, folks that are as dumb as you to start with. You gotta learn." He asked, and listened. "That's all o' that." He hung up.

"Now you call the Rexton Hotel, an' ask who Miss St. Clair is, and does she live there an——"

"Here—you been saying *Sin*clair——"

"Never you mind what I been saying. My boss can't say 'T' an' I let him get by with it." She was haughty now. "And you ask the Rexton does Miss St. Clair own any car and when she bought it and where she got it and what kind? And was it stole and when? And what kinda clothes she had on when she left and——"

"I won't—" said the constable.

"Oh yes you will," said Maisie calmly, eyeing him gimletlike. "My head's just beginning to work. You been rentin' Arthur for two days and that's confoundin' a felony. You could be sent up for usin' a vehickle which you was under the intentions was stole. And be quick about it, too, because I was talkin' with a bus driver through the bars last night an' he ain't got no love for you either, an' he was goin' in to the police station this morning and report that I found my car an' that you're holdin' me out here unlegal, and he's gonna report at the same time how much he's paid you an' this justice in fines this last year an' have 'em check up and see if you've turned in all that money to the county an'——"

"I'll ring up the hotel just to prove you're lying,"

said the constable. But the back of his neck was red.

"And then we'll just sit and wait for the officers to come and rescue me," she said placidly. Her inventive mind had just begun to move and she was thinking up another one to frighten him with. The last one had gone over good. "And I bet you never reported at all that you found Arthur—an' if you haven't——"

Arthur chose that exact second to drive into the feed-yard.

"Here, Hi," called the townsman. "Here's your flivver. I got a right likely mess o' q——"

"I'll see you later—" the constable yelled loudly, but too late.

"Oh—" said Maisie. "Q— he doesn't mean quail, does he? I hadn't noticed it was quail season."

"See here," said the constable, fingering the chin spinach. "Maybe I made a mistake. Maybe you're Miss Sinclair after all, and I guess it is your car, but if I let you go with a reprimand for drivin' without a license will you promise to get one as soon as you get to Sacramento?"

"You ain't lettin' me go with nothing, uncle," said Maisie joyously. "I'm goin', an' you just try and stop me. And dig up my hand bag before I have this justice make me out a heavous corpus cristi."

"It's right here—" he produced the bag from back of the counter where the justice was presiding in lieu of a bench. "But I really could fine you for——"

"For huntin' quail outta season?" she sneered gaily. "Whyn't you try to pin that on me, seein' as it was done in my car?"

"If I was you, I'd get on the way before them officers come along for you. You mightn't be able to make them believe your story like you done to me. It might make you a lot of trouble."

"I guess they're as likely to come as the ones I sent for—" Maisie jibed, climbing into her coupé. She settled herself, bag beside her. "Which ain't likely as I never sent for any," she laughed. "No more than you did. You never intended to tell 'em about that stolen car, either. You was too busy rentin' it. And that reminds me, I want the rent you been gettin' for Arthur these last two days. I get ten dollars a day for Arthur when I rent him. Fork over twenty bones."

The justice started to grin, and the constable moved back from the car, but Maisie reached out and grabbed the whiskers. "Twenty—" she howled. As he dug down, one hand trying to protect his spinachy chin, Maisie shook the whiskers. He brought out some currency and Maisie reached for and took two tens. "Pay my fines with the rest," she cried. "And save some to pay your own, as I'm likely to hunt up a game warden before the sun goes down upon my wrath—" Leaving a purpling limb of the law in the road shaking a wild arm, she sped away, breaking all the speed laws.

"Well," gasped George late that afternoon. In

fact, just at closing time. "I thought you were in Catalina, Miss Snclair——"

"Did you?" Maisie replied placidly. "Well I ain't."

"Didn't you like it?"

"Love it," she said. "That's why I'm goin' there—next summer. This summer—well, you gotta be a experienced vacationist to be educated up to the tourist class. An' a vacation all by yourself ain't nothing to leave home for. It's like doublin' in brass; one thing to talk about it an' another to try and do it. And absence makes the heart grow fonder—that ain't no lie. I guess I'm better off in the bosom o' my family. I'll wait till you come back from your vacation an' then maybe I'll go to the place where you are for a coupla days. That'd be chummier——"

"OOOmp—" said George. And then to change the subject— "By the way, Miss Snclair, there was a most peculiar telephone call earlier today. Some one in a small town up the valley said a lady there said she was you, and that she was in jail for highway robbery and forgery. They wanted me to come up and identify her."

"Did you go?" she asked, sweetly.

"No, I knew it wasn't you," explained George Dorsey, Attorney-at-Law.

"Why o' course not. Somebody tryin' to put something over on you. Good thing I came back. Murder is about the only crime I c'n think of I'd be likely to commit. O' course it wasn't me. The jail ain't built

that'd hold me," she said innocently. "Long—" she added.

Which gave George something to think about, and he retired to do so.

XI

OUTSLICKING SLICKER

"DO I miss George?" repeated Maisie, in answer to Mr. Wing's question. "Do I miss him? Why say, Mr. Wing, I'm gettin' so angwayed I'm about to blow up with a loud and well advertised bang. I may be this office, as I may say in all modestness, but the house is cold on the act. This few days he's been gone is just like a dress rehearsal."

She smoothed an already satin-smooth marcel of honey-color just as she had seen a favorite movie star do it, and heaved a mighty sigh. Mr. Wing held his breath. It had been days since anything of note had happened. It was a dull July, and he wanted a good laugh; also this was usually the place to get it.

There really wasn't anything to do to consume Maisie's energy. Friday she would have to go to the courthouse to attend to two small matters, one of them the Grossman case. But until then there was not a thing in sight. Mr. Wing went on out, sighing.

And Maisie thought about the Grossman case. That case was one of her pets; at least it was a case which she had brought into the office. She had

happened to be on the spot when a small, cheap touring car had apparently knocked down a sleek-haired lounge-lizard sort of young man and she had given her name as a witness to the distracted car owner who was sure he had no more than brushed the fellow's coat tail. The Grossman person, however, had been equally sure that he had been dealt a death-blow and had lain recumbent upon the pavement until assisted to the curb where he moaned piteously that he was dying. Another motorist had taken him to the hospital, at the victim's suggestion. He would not ride with his attacker——

Mr. Marcy, the mild, worried driver of the cheap little car, had come to see Maisie, later, and finding that she worked for an attorney, had talked it over with George. Grossman, it seems, had insisted upon being taken to his home instead of a hospital, and then later had sued Mr. Marcy for heavy damages. That he would be unable to walk for months and perhaps forever, was his plea; that he was permanently injured was his platform! Poor little Mr. Marcy.

The case had been answered by George, and on Friday Maisie was to attend to the filing of some documents, and the setting for trial of the case, in Department Sixteen. So, until Friday, there was an interval which was deadly.

That Maisie might even be driven to reading a book seemed probable, and that would, of course, attest desperation. As a general thing, life offered

too many diversions for getting tied up in a good murder story which would *have* to be finished.

The Grossman case was still on her mind, however. She wondered, what with her spare time, if she might not get a slant on the evidence upon which George might base some defense. George was a good lawyer, but it was going pretty far to expect even a good cook to bake a cake with no ingredients. And Maisie St. Clair didn't think Grossman was really knocked down; she thought he just laid down from fright, maybe. If the boy couldn't walk—that was something else again. Every now and then the little pea appears to be under this shell or that, when all the time it isn't under any of them.

Then the thought came—even if the Grossman person were hurt, he might settle. George had been inclined to doubt the wisdom of trying a settlement, preferring to deny liability entirely. Maisie had been of the opinion that overtures might not come amiss, and maybe it would be a good idea to find this Grossman or his doctor and find out just how badly the bird was hurt and how cheaply she could buy a release for Marcy. If it didn't work, George needn't know she had tried it. And if it did, he would have to be grateful forever. That was a thought to lay away in orris root and lavender.

So Maisie studied the city directory for a little while. Blaine Grossman resided on Cliftwood Drive. That sounded like a stylish neighborhood. His father was listed as a wholesale grocer, and he had a sister

who was a teacher. It sounded straight, but it never hurt to look a thing up. So, after a while, Maisie walked around to the garage where she kept the nifty coop, bud vase and all, astonishing the man on duty by the hour at which she came.

"Lose your job, kid?" he asked jovially.

"Lose my job kid?" she disdained him. "Do I look like a *kid?* Miss Snclair, to you, sir, and many of 'em. And as to my job, losin' one is something I ain't acquainted with. I might quit sometime, but lose it? Not while I control it like it was a throttle and I was the engineer. I'm the bird that keeps it runnin'." And she gave Arthur the gas in high dudgeon.

Cliftwood Drive had sounded stylish. It had been meant to sound stylish. But the style had departed with the first coat of paint from the rows of small, crowded bungalows and the sale and delivery of last lot in the tract. From then on, it was up to the purchasers, and they seemed to care less for style than sub-dividers. It was frankly dingy, slatternly, and more like what Maisie had hoped than its name was. A lounge lizard from this neighborhood might be easy to handle. Past the number allotted to the Grossmans Maisie guided her little coupé of tin, slowly and with an eye to inmates. There was no sign of life. On her second trip around the block, she stopped and rang the bell, or tried to. It didn't seem to ring. Then she knocked. But there was no reply.

As she walked back to the coupé at the curb, a frowsy woman in a brilliant kimono howled from the run-down cottage nearest on the east:

"Was you huntin' Grossmans?"

"Yes'm," said Maisie meekly. "I was wantin' to see their son Blaine. Is he sick in bed?"

"You mean 'Slicker'?"

"Well—" Maisie hesitated. Slicker!

"He's the nocount, pool hall one," said the woman. She seemed pleased at an opportunity to say it. "Him that was run over by an automobile," she sneered. "They had to take him away for his health. They got him down to one of the beaches. I dunno which one."

"I'd sure like to see 'im," said Maisie longingly. "Don't anyone know where they went?"

"Doctor Tackwood," she said shortly. And then in a burst of confidence added: "You're the fourth girl that's been out here hunting him since they went! Beats all what a girl will fall for, an' you look like you had more sense. But one of the others had a Strindler car—so there's no accounting for tastes. I s'pose you'll say you're one o' his exhibition dancin' pardners at that Main Street Crawl, too——"

"No'm," said Maisie politely. "I was in his Sunday-School class and I'm doin' a act of charity in visitin' the sick."

"Sunday-School class!" gasped her listener. "Well that's in a class by itself. That one—goin' to Sun-

day-School—he must have went to it Saturday nights!"

"Right after his bath—" said Maisie. "Maybe!"

"Well if he don't change none, you'll be doing your charity visiting to 'im in the hoosegow before long, or I'll miss my guess—" and she went in with the triumphant look of one woman who had the last word over another!

"So that look in 'is eye wasn't no lie—" giggled Maisie, joyously. "He looked like a shell-game artist to me when I saw 'im layin' flat." She grinned once more. "Now to ask Dr. Tackwood about my dancin' partner, Slicker. Inf'mation just naturally comes to me like aces to a man with a forty dollar raise called three ways. Slicker!"

Doctor Tackwood, however, did not feel like dealing aces that afternoon. It may have been that three other damsels had asked, and it may have been that he was dishonestly discreet, not honestly disgruntled. "I do not allow my patient to see anyone," he said. "The excitement isn't good for him. That's one reason I had them take him to—to the beach."

"Couldn't I just call up to see how he is?" pleaded Maisie. She waggled her amber eyes.

"I can tell you that as often as you're interested," he snapped. "And he's in bad shape. His back is hurt badly."

"Thank you so much," said Maisie. "I'm glad to know even that." And she was.

So that was that. It seemed her endeavor to settle

this case for George wasn't coming to much. But she could still try the Main Street Crawl.

Maisie tried that, that night. And her eyes sparkled as she came down the narrow stairs from the public dance hall, and as she started her car she chuckled. So, that was the way the land lay? Slicker was in luck that he was laid up. Trouble certainly hung above his path when he should reappear. But that was none of M. St. Clair's business. Her business was to find him now. For she had found out plenty—about him.

It was late that night when she returned to the Mackinaw Building to busy herself with composition; and it was later when she managed to evolve what seemed a creditable letter, sealed and stamped it and carried it to the post office for quicker delivery. It had "Special Delivery" across its face, and there were enough stamps. If Slicker Grossman had any curiosity at all, he would answer that letter.

"If that dance-hall dame hadn't been his special friend, she'd even a-told me the exact number," she laughed to herself. "But the hint that she got him Special Delivery wasn't to be sneezed at."

Slicker was curious. He answered. By telegraph. The wire was awaiting Maisie when she got home from the office the very next evening. He was at Carson Cove, a small and retiring beach resort a few miles beyond Venice; and he was awfully glad she would come to see him. He was anxious to hear

about Gladys and Bat and would she come on Friday, as his sister wouldn't be home then?

That, Maisie howled inwardly, was the canary's earmuffs. With this bird in debt so deep he couldn't float, let alone wade out, and the swimming a bit thick this season, he ought to be anxious to settle this right on the nail for cash and no doubt would take a little less than his ardent prayer in his complaint had mentioned! Considerable less, if she was not blind, deaf and dumb, and Maisie was willing to demonstrate to the audience that she was not. Then he could pay his debts and square himself with his gang and come out of hiding. Otherwise, he would be spending more time "laid up" than the automobile accident would be responsible for. That was the argument presented by an erstwhile friend of his, and it sounded plausible.

And wouldn't George be pleased? Saying nothing of Mr. Marcy.

Friday Maisie left the office in charge of Miss Kellogg, and well filled with gas and oil—that is, Arthur was—started for Carson Cove. Her checkbook she carefully put under the seat of the car, in case of Slicker's capitulation. In her handbag she bore a typed release for the "plaintiff" to sign if she could get him talked into it. That she could put it over, she had no doubt whatever.

When she told him what she had gathered at the Main Street Crawl; that "Bat" Bowes, the light-

weight "pug," had stepped in and forgetting friendship, had stolen Slicker's girl, Gladys; that "Bat" was now hoping for Slicker's recovery so that he could demolish him once again; that several other prominent figures at the Crawl, to whom he owed money and other courtesies, were "laying for him"; that "Bat" and Gladys were figuring on winning the annual dance tournament which had been Slicker's own foregone meat for lo, these many moons, Slicker would sign and take the money. She felt it in her bones.

The Maisie who headed her car towards Carson Cove would not have been recognized by the late frequenters of the office; her reversion to type was complete, even to the earrings and the scarlet dancing sandals. And at that, she matched her own particular brand of English much better than the well-groomed, smoothly coifed, personable young goddess of recent months. And she felt that it had to be done. Slicker had to be out-slicked. And she had to look the part.

After she got into his confidence with her gossip, she could talk about his lawsuit and say that the money from that might get him out of all these other troubles, and wouldn't he relish having it now, so he could rattle it together. Just like that, you know!

If he really was hurt, she wouldn't do it. But she just felt there was something phoney about it.

It was no trouble to find the beach cottage he had

designated. The last one beyond the inlet, with the yellow awnings. There it was. She knocked twice, and after a moment heard creaking boards which indicated occupancy. Then, after she must have been inspected from a crack somewhere, the door was flung open and Slicker himself in frowsy, unkempt state, stood before her.

"Are you—Slicker—Grossman?" she stammered prettily.

"Sure, 'ats me, an' I don't mean maybe. Pleased to meetcha, Miss St. Clair. That's you I guess."

"That's me sure enough—" and then she faltered. "But—they told me at the Crawl that you was sick in bed—badly injured!"

"Applesauce!" said Slicker, indicating that he wished she would enter, which she did. "'At's a stall. I'll tell you about it, cutie. Have a chair. I was real tickled to get your letter. I been wondering what that bunch of twelve-minute eggs around the Crawl was sayin' behind my back. Did you see Glad? The soft one, that weeps into her soup and wants a guy to moon over her? And 'Bat' Bowes? You mentioned him. He's pretty sore at me account I copped his damsel on him quite a while back—least he was when I laid off the joint. It ain't my fault the dames fall for me. I always been that way, but I ain't got time for most of 'em."

He waited for this to sink in: "Pardon my looks, cutie," he added. "But I been stickin' close to the house. I got reason o' my own an' my old man has

got another. An' it's a different one. What'd 'Bat' have to say?"

"Oh, I just drifted in an' asked for you, me knowin' some friends o' yours an' workin' in the Gay Susie Company with a jane you used to rush—" she smiled charmingly and flung the amber eyes sideways, which seemed to stagger Slicker. "An' 'Bat' danced with me after I was knocked down to 'im an' he told me you was in pretty bad around there, and some girl friend o' his said you was badly hurt. And I was sorry to hear it. Was it pretty bad?" She knew the information wasn't far from the surface.

"I wasn't hurt as much as I would be if 'Bat' Bowes was to catch up with me," he admitted. "Nope. I wasn't hurt bad. I was bumped by an auto, and bruised some, and that give me the idea. I was due for a little trouble you know, a fatty'd been trailin' me a couple days—a little matter I wasn't to blame for. It was a fellow I was with that slipped the car, but he let me use it, me not knowin' it was hot, an' Glad saw me trailin' a strange dame around in it and spilled it. That sicked 'em onto the car. I don't know why I'm tellin' you this, cutie, but you're a friend o' May's from the Gay Susie Company, an' you was friendly enough to come down and put me wise to what that bunch o' highbinders is sayin' an' I consider you a friend. Well, I took my little bump as a sign I should lay in the dark for a while, and anyway my old man was about to turn me in his-

self, only I showed him how we could make money off this damage case an' pay me enough to square all the trouble I was in and some for him, an' he wouldn't hafto dig up nothing."

"Oh yes," said Maisie. "I see." And she did. All idea of settlement was gone now, dried up, faded, vanished. The thing to do now was to get enough on Slicker Grossman to beat that suit. Her word would not be proof. She had to have something to back up her word.

"But that 'Bat' makes me sick, thinking he can cop the cup and the prize money with Glad! Not that I'm jealous, you understand. Women hang around me too much as it is, but that stiff has got as much chance of winning that cup—say, I gotta show him up. I c'n win it myself, if I can get dough enough to square me so I can go back an' enter. An' I gotta keep outta sight to get the dough. Ain't that luck?"

"It's terrible," said Maisie. "They might find out you wasn't hurt."

"They might," said Slicker reflectively.

"It must be pretty lonesome around here when you're used to a good time," she said at random. She wondered if she could prod him into bursting forth from confinement to enter that dance contest. She could have him spotted then, and prove he could dance.

"Sure," he agreed. "Say," he said suddenly. "You danced with 'Bat'—that's an indication you're in

my class, although I'm better than 'Bat.' But he's particular about his dancin' partners as I am, almost. That gives me an idea. There's a mask ball up at Venice tonight. Whyn't me and you step up there for the evening? Masked you see, nobody would know I was out." . .

That was going to be easy. She wouldn't have to wait for the dance contest to get her evidence. She could get it on him tonight. In public.

"You gotta steady?" Slicker asked, feeling her hesitation.

"Me?" Maisie grinned. "Say, boy, I may be simple but I ain't puttin' iodine on the places my wisdom teeth is expected to come through. They all been in an' workin' since I was sixteen."

"You sling a mean cross to the jaw," he admired her. "And your uppercut ain't no slouch either. I bet they don't count you out often. An' I bet you're a knockout with the dogs. What say we step out and cop the prize money at that mask tonight? Like as not 'Bat' Bowes would come down and enter. But he'd never know me in a costume. What say?"

"Sure—" Maisie was wondering how to get word to Mr. Wing, or someone reliable, to come and catch them there dancing. Or Mr. Marcy.

"If we win the money and the cup, I'll give you the cup for yourself," said Slicker generously. "Though I most generally keep 'em."

"How about costumes?" Maisie considered.

"We don't need real ones. Just masks is enough. But Pap would raise particular aitch if he knew I was out steppin'."

Maisie had a recurrent vision of "wholesale grocer" after "Pap's" name in the directory. "What does he do?" she asked.

"He used to be in the grocery business when groceries sold bottled goods—" he laughed. "But he's gotta bottlin' works now, see?"

She didn't see, just at first, but later it dawned on her.

"Your sister's a school-teacher, isn't she?" she asked, and then turned cold at the slip.

"Who said she was?"

"Why—" she said, deciding on candor. "The city directory. There's where I got your address."

"Oh," he relaxed and Maisie breathed freely again. "Yeah! She's a teacher—in a beauty school. That's the kinda teacher she is. She's a high stepper herself, sis is. That's howcome she's gone today. Think she's got a sweetie or something at Venice. She's been gone quite a little lately."

There was a silence. "Well, how about it?" Slicker asked. "Do we go to the mask? An' cop the prize? I c'd get a flask if I had a—a few bones in the old pocket——"

"I bet you could—" she encouraged.

"Only—" he hinted. "Say, cutie, you ain't got a case note along have you? I hate t' ask a lady, but—

we could step while it lasts—an' I'd slip it back to you when I get the dough outta this ham I'm suin'—" he reached playfully for her purse, and her hand. "Trust me, girlie? Lemme look?"

Before he had undone the purse's flap Maisie knew that the dice had turned a snake-eyes for her—there was a "sawbuck" in the purse, although her check-book was under the seat of the coupé, but in that purse was a typed release all ready for the plaintiff to sign, in the case of Grossman vs. Marcy. She reached for the bag, but too late. Slicker had found the "case note" kissed it and removed it to his pocket —and then he saw the title on the folded document.

Maisie leaped one second before Slicker did but not in the same direction. Where he had leaped at her she had turned toward the door and made it. Her thrifty soul regretted the loss of the purse and the money, but escape was worth it.

"Beat it, feet," she prayed as she made the coupé and climbed in. Slamming the door had helped. Warped by sea air, it had stuck, so that Slicker was well in the rear when she started the engine and did a turn on a thin dime in the sandy road. The lurch of the car threw her against the sharp corner of something in the car, something in the cloth pocket of the door, something that poked painfully. Once around headed for the little town she left the car to its own gait and investigated. And that gave her the idea.

Quick as a flash she reached for the choke and flooded the carburetor and the car slowed, coughed, stopped. Slicker, who had ceased his running as the car made the turn, began to run again. Hope sprang to life; this jane was a dick and his goose was cooked unless he stopped her, maybe locked her up somewhere until after the trial. He had friends. He even considered pushing her into the bay. He'd teach her to trail him around and trick him like that. He gathered speed—and so did the car, purring sweetly with the choke closed.

Maisie reached into the car pocket and pulled out the "poking" article, her camera, left in the car from her vacation trip. She focused it upon Slicker Grossman pounding up the road after her, long legs flying, arms flailing the air like D. Quixote's windmills and triumph in his rat eyes. A moment she poised, then—click—went the shutter and with a lightning movement she slipped in the clutch.

Slicker had run a good hundred yards and was becoming winded, so he did a little clutch throwing himself in reaching for the spare tire on the rear of the coupé, and just then it moved away! Flat on his face he plumped, and then roaring, started up again.

Click went the shutter again, another picture.

"It's my turn to run now," howled Maisie out of the side window and she turned the curve as Slicker stood scraping sand from his eyes. "You big boob!

I'm on my way to give 'Bat' and Gladys your address. Just because I'm beating it, don't think I'm scared—you couldn't scare nobody from behind bars, an' that's where you'll be before Marcy gets through with you. I got a friend or two among the dicks myself. You better keep on layin' low—and wear a mask whenever you come to town! I'll let you keep all the prizes you win." She slowed down and yelled back again:

"You're welcome to the twenty and you can mail in the release when you sign it. I'm sorry you can't ever walk again. It's gonna be hard to *run* all the time. G'bye, Slicker. See you in the pen some time."

That—thought Maisie, deserved a holiday. How grateful George would be. And just then a pedestrian hailed her.

"Going in to Venice?" he called. "I was having to walk it——"

"Sure, c'mon, ride," and she opened the door invitingly.

"What was the bird chasin' you for?" he laughed. "Have a row?"

"Say," replied Maisie. "You're an angel from Heaven if you only knew it. Will you come into town and to my office and make a affadivot you saw that bird chasin' me? And did you see me stop an'——"

"You stopped and did something, pointed something—I thought maybe you was going to shoot him," said the cheerful passenger.

"It was a camera," she grinned. "And all I need

to win a heavy lawsuit is somebody to prove that I took that picture this very day at this very time, of that bird runnin'. He claims he can't walk—" she explained.

"I sure will," said the grateful one. "I'll be glad to."

"Name your poison," Maisie grinned, "and take the pot. I'll give you my card when I guide this leapin' jewfish into a parkin' station—" which she did. Of course her passenger would come in and sign anything. He liked amber eyes, and he wanted to see those again.

"One whale of a day," Maisie called it. She rode the race through the clouds, and the ferris wheel, after cashing a check of course, and she went through the crazy house. Oh, it was a wonderful day. Just as the lights were twinkling into being, she stopped pensively before the White Palace. In a little while the dancing partners would be thick as flies, and she had on her scarlet sandals—she waggled her earrings much like the old Maisie, and then she heard a voice at her shoulder.

"Miss Snclair!"

There was George—so close to home! Spending his vacation at Venice! She blinked at him. And George, in turn, blinked at the scarlet sandals, the flyaway hair and the earrings, scarcely able to believe his eyes. At that moment Maisie became conscious of her attire, back to the style she had discarded, and she blushed crimson. Had she never

learned about clothes, Maisie had been elegantly gowned now, but she had learned!

"I been out all day—on business—" she explained.

"All day!" George gasped. "Not at the office?" Out on business—in that old rig?

"Well, not today—" she stammered.

"Miss Snclair—" George went right up in the air as usual. "Is it possible that I cannot trust you to remain in the office while I'm away on vacation? Must I have my much-needed rest spoiled by the knowledge that you're leaving the place unattended?"

Maisie wouldn't have minded so much, but she had noticed that George was not alone. A female object was waiting, just a few feet away.

"This is going pretty far—" he went on.

"Not so far," she returned easily. "Only twenty miles."

"And this is Friday—" said George. "You didn't attend to the ——"

"Oh can it!" she retorted angrily. "I attended to it—I'll say I did."

She had looked George's companion over and she didn't think much of her. To be sure, the other girl's sandals were newer, and white; her earrings might have cost a dollar instead of fifteen cents; but her dress was a shade too bright and her hair was a shade and a half too red. Heaven never made her face that color, either. And the eyebrows! So that

was the kind George liked! Why should she—Maisie—bother to be the real thing if he was satisfied with imitations after all? A scorn for her boss shook Maisie.

"I'll rise to remark that I attended to that case plenty—" she roared at him. "I got that Marcy case tied up in a sack and threw overboard, Grossman in it. I been to see Grossman." She hadn't meant to tell it just that way, but George had goaded her into it. She had to hit hard, and quickly.

"To see Grossman!" George roared, and a crowd gathered. They hoped they were going to see a good fight.

"That—Miss Snclair—" said George distinctly, white and cold he was, "is positively the last straw. The time has come when there is nothing more to be said. I am quite capable of attending to my own cases! What on earth—ever possessed you—no doubt you've spoiled all the good work I've put in on that case. I've been spending practically my entire vacation in settling that case with Grossman's sister—only today she has agreed to take sixty-five hundred in settlement—and sign a release. And now—you've spoiled it——"

It occurred to Maisie to wonder why George had tried to settle that case at all! She had suggested that and he had repudiated the idea. Repudiated it, and then gone out and tried to do it. And he'd got them to settle for sixty-five hundred!

"This is Miss Grossman—" George added.

"Oh, it is—" said Maisie bitingly, and the girl changed color. "Well I'll say I spoiled a settlement on that case—I'll say so in Rooshian, French and sev'ral other langwidges, for I spoiled it in that many. An' as for Miss Grossman, if she wants to take care of her badly injured brother she'd better beat it, for the last time I saw 'im he was runnin' south an' has prob'ly reached Mexico by now——"

"Running—" gasped George. Miss Grossman had moved toward the boardwalk, trying to be inconspicuous.

"You'd better join 'im—" Maisie howled after her.

"Are you trying to insult my cl—" George began.

"Since when was she?" she demanded fiercely. "I thought Marcy was."

George regretted the use of the word and would have said so, but Maisie gave him no time.

"It's no use, Mister Dorsey—" she said cuttingly. "I can yell as loud as you can. I admit you're the lawyer, but there ain't no party alive that it hurts to find out something now and then. An' it's lucky for us there's two of us in the office. It's saved him sixty-five hundred bones. An' I ain't filed the Grossman notice of trial nor got a date on it, but I tried the case an' won it an' they owe us money. That crook Grossman is tied hand and foot and headin' for the tall uncut."

"What's all this about—" stuttered George, trying to watch Miss Grossman, who was walking rapidly toward the street car line.

"I got your case won on a roll o' films an' a darn reliable witness which seen me take the pictures—" Maisie informed him. "An' the plaintiff usin' the same legs which he alleviates in his complaint ain't workin'. Are they workin'? Say, boy, if you was that fast I'd back you against Nurmi. There—" she handed him a roll of films from her pocket. "There's your Grossman case, tied up and delivered special. As to my job, you can have it. I sorta feel I ain't appreshiated."

George looked dumbly at the small roll in his hand. He began to see.

"I—I was hasty—" he said. "Miss Snclair—you are appreciated."

"Well the rest o' your vacation will you try an' rest easy that I'm doin' what I was left doin' and takin' care o' things?" she demanded severely. "And rest your mind I ain't goin' back to these duds permanent. They fit the part, you see. That's the kind that turns the trick on a bird like Slicker Grossman—an' on others maybe—" she added significantly.

"Miss Snclair—" George began.

"Save it to tell Marcy," she sniffed. "Let's you an' me try to get along. You couldn't make a worse mistake then to fire me, and I guess I c'd do worse

than stick. Glue's a right friendly kinda lickwid. Try developin' a picture o' me doin' you dirt, Geo—Mr. Dorsey. It'd come out blank. Laugh that off."

And with a lump in his throat, George couldn't.

XII

MAISIE GETS A BLISTER

CERTAINLY things were dull. Inaction was a thing that depressed Maisie. IN ACTION was much more to her liking. And since George was on his vacation there had been but one thing to cheer her up; that had been the Slicker Grossman case. Since then it had been deadly. She was wondering what she could do to pass the time. The calm before the storm, one might have called it. So she welcomed the loud and purposeful knock on the outer door. What sort of person would knock on the hall door of an attorney's suite.

"C'mon in and look out—" she howled.

The knocker did. He was a dyspeptic little man with a wizened face which wasn't much higher from the floor than Maisie's own piquant one, an Adam's apple which protruded like a Roman nose and feet which would have put Charlie Chaplin to shame—as would also the shoes upon them.

"Well!" grinned Maisie. "We don't buy nothing."

"Dorsey?" moaned the funny little man, ignoring her.

"Do I look it? Don't tell me you're a client," she giggled.

"I got one," he replied.

"Hand 'im over—" said Maisie. "George is away temporally, but I'm as good a lawyer as he is. What kinda case?"

"Got to see Dorsey," said the little man, making a funny face.

"Now see here, dearie," Maisie beamed upon him. "Don't play games with me. I take care of the clients. What's on your candidate's mind?"

"This—" said the other. Then Maisie got the shock of her life. It wasn't a case for George, but against him. Somebody was suing him!

"Lemme see," she wheedled and turned the full glory of her amber eyes upon him.

The man, though by any line of reasoning a total blank, still was male. He succumbed and handed over the paper.

A suit against George for fifteen hundred dollars? How in time could he have run up a bill of that size? His looks weren't good for that much credit by anyone with sense. A little further on she found the reason. With the innocence of the entirely honest, George had signed a bond for someone by the name of Liscomb and Liscomb had hit the trail. In other words, George was stuck for being a good guy. Well, this was going to be the blow that would make a madman out of one only slightly touched, or Maisie missed her guess. Good thing he had got away for his vacation before they called their shot.

Fifteen hundred dollars? George didn't have that much—how well she knew. She often made his modest deposits for him. Business was good, but not good enough to have accumulated that in the short time he had been going strong. There were always lean spots in the pay streak. This was one of the lean spots. Something must be done. The first thing would be to put off the evil hour.

"You can't serve this for a month," she said casually.

"I gotta. I can't go back and say I can't. I don't serve processes that way," said the little man. "I go after 'em. Where'd 'e go?"

"Now listen, brother," said Maisie grandly. "So far as you're concerned there's lilies blooming on his grave—for one month."

"Then I've lost me my job," said the little man without a change of expression.

"Wait a minute—" she said, thinking. "When you go out to serve a process, are you still serving it till you come back with it served?"

"Yup," said he.

He was funny. He looked funny, he talked funny and he acted funny. She sort of hated to lose him. She had an idea.

"Well, you stick around and wait," she said brightly.

"How long?"

"Till he gets back. An' maybe you could do some work here while you're waitin'."

As has been said, he was human, and male, although his looks belied him.

"What at?" He balanced on one foot until Maisie was sure there would be a crash, and then righted himself and shifted to the other. Then he grinned at her. The grin decided her. You could trust that little man.

"What's your name?" she demanded.

"Tripp. Aloysius Solomon Tripp."

"Awright, Wishy. How long you been workin' for those folks?"

"Month."

"Right permanent, aren't you? Whadyou do before that?"

"Scrubbing; steam-cleaning; gardener; road-gang; paint——"

"Never mind the gruesome details. It don't seem like I need any o' those things," she interrupted. "An' I don't need any processes served. Ain't there nothing you always wanted to do if you hadda chance?"

It was in her mind that if he did not return and say he couldn't serve George, that George's troubles would be over. He had the papers. Also, she might make some money and pay that fifteen hundred, some way, before George came back.

"Detecktif," said the little man. "I took it by mail."

"Detective," grinned the girl. "Well if that ain't

just the ticker. You rent George's office from me——"

"Can't—" said he.

"Now listen. Ain't you never had no ambition to be anything else but just a crag in the machine?" she quoted at random from partly remembered advertisements. "Be respected by big business men, belong to good clubs, wear shiny patent leather shoes, a silk hat an' be your own boss? Lookit me! Two years ago I was holdin' on for dear life to a thirteen-a-week job, an' now I'm holdin' down a position in which the boss eats outta my hand; I prac'ly run the joint, got some hard round ones laid away for the old ladies' home, got a auto with blue curtains an' a bud-vase, got a little income droppin' in the sock from a couple o' accident investions, an' what could be sweeter? Why not branch out. Be a detective. You can sneak around and pick up a lot o' info. that oughtta be worth dough to you. Why, to my way o' thinkin', blackmailin' ain't in it for quick getaways an' fat bank rolls. What's standin' in your light?"

"Hunh?"

"Married?"

"Unhunh," said Aloysius. But he sighed. "But I couldn't rent the office."

"Why?"

"I'm flat."

"Oh well, you c'd owe me. You'd get a case pretty quick."

"'Sposin' I didn't?"

"Say, couldn't you teach detectin'?"

"Who to?" His eyes were frankly wistful now. It would be a privilege to be in the same office with this deity, said his dog look.

"Oh that's easy. I c'd dig up some scholars."

"All right," said Tripp, taking off his hat. "Go ahead."

"Fine."

"Where do I sit?" he asked calmly. "In this room?"

"Yeh," said Maisie. "An' if anyone comes in while I'm out to lunch you ask if they want any detectin' done or know anybody who does." And she sauntered out to laugh. On second thought she turned back, reached for the summons he was to serve on George, and thoughtfully tore it into little bits, dropping them into the waste basket. Tripp said nothing.

As Maisie stepped into the elevator memory prodded her. Benny, the operator, had an ambition to become a policeman! Another idea, little brother to the other one, popped up. The fact that he was undersized, undernourished, undersupplied with gray matter, was outside the issue. Benny ardently desired to be a policeman. The uniform of elevator starter somehow seemed a stepping stone, and Benny, in the strictest private, practiced a hard jaw, talking out of the side of his mouth and putting handcuffs upon an imaginary prisoner. Some of this he had confided to Maisie, being a Maisie-fan.

"Hey, Benny," she said lingering until the other passengers had stepped out. "Would knowin' detectin' help you to get on the force?"

"Gosh yes, Miss Maisie," said Benny agape. "Of course it would."

A qualm struck Maisie; Benny was so innocent. And there was some doubt as to Tripp's ability to teach detecting. However, she promised herself—and mentally, Benny—that if Benny wanted detecting lessons he should have them, and if Tripp didn't deliver the goods, she, personally, Maisie St. Clair, who had never yet failed a friend, would go out and drag in some detecting lessons which would be the cats'. Benny would profit and she would guarantee it.

"All right. How much would it be worth to take lessons from a detective in our office?"

"Wha'de charge?"

"Could you take fifty dollars' worth? Ten down and ten a week for a month?"

"I could," said Benny with heartfelt thanks. "When c'n I start?"

"Right after lunch," replied Maisie briskly.

So at one o'clock, she scurried into the suite dragging the ecstatic Benny behind her.

"Hey, Tripp," she called. "Here's your scholar. For ten down and ten a week for a month you teach him everything you know about detectin'. And what you don't know you find out and what you can't find out, I'll learn myself and teach the both

of you. And when anybody comes in this building lookin' for a detective, Benny'll shoo 'em up here and you get all the dirt an' when they're ready for a lawyer you turn 'em over to me. We're goin' to do a flourishin' business, I can see that. Benny, meet your teacher, Mr. Tripp. Benny, what's your last name——"

"Falk—" said Benny. "Benjamin Winter Falk." To that word Maisie did obeisance, misunderstanding the final "k."

"Well ain't that a line straight from the two-a-day—" she howled. "Beat that if you can. Trip and Fall. You trip on an' the curtain does the rest of it. Wow! It's a good act if you don't do nuthin' but *be!*" She shrieked in glee. "Well Benny, make your first payment and start in."

"How——"

"You pay it to me an' I'll apply it on the rent Tripp owes me," she added.

"How much—how—" choked Tripp. How could one ask divinity what it was going to cost.

"Well, this fifty Benny pays in will pay your rent and the rest you make will be velvet," said Maisie grandly. There was fifty on the fifteen hundred George was in trouble for. It ought to be easy to get the rest.

"Yes'm, thank you," said Tripp.

She shut them into George's office happily. Only fourteen hundred and fifty to think up.

"Miss Maisie," said Tripp, sticking his head out

the door. "I can't teach detecting without some disguises."

"Disguises—" she gasped. "What's that got to do with detecting?"

"You got to change your looks," he insisted doggedly. "I oughtta have some crape hair at least."

"Well, whyn't you go get it." Then she understood.

"No cash—" she grinned. "Here's a coupla bones. Go buy yourself enough crape to cover a hearse."

Afterwards she enjoyed seeing Tripp cut the woolly stuff into shapes and attach it to Benny's round face with spirit gum. It was like seeing an actor make up for his part. It brought back thin memories from her childhood among the mummers. Benny likewise enjoyed it. He wanted to wear one of the moustaches back to work but Maisie vetoed that. How could anyone get ahead in detecting if everyone knew who one was? she argued, and Benny finally agreed with her.

There was still a haunting doubt of Tripp's ability in her mind, so after a while she went out and took a few up-and-down rides with Benny to pump him as to what he learned. It seemed to be the goods. Parrotlike, Benny recited the few things Tripp had drilled him in, and to the girl they had the ring of efficiency. Tripp seemed to have learned the lessons. Could he put them in practice?

Deep in reflection, she had paid little attention to the other passengers in the car's trips up or down.

She scarcely noticed the portly man who got off at the fifth floor. Not the person, that is; but she did notice the luggage he carried. It was a darb of a suitcase, a shiny patent leather, snappy, two-lock affair. She had a penchant for patent leather. Fascinated, she watched the suitcase until the cage door slammed behind it.

It was when she was starting out for the evening, the day's work(?) done, that she saw the suitcase again. It got on at the fifth, and then Maisie noticed its owner. A well-set-up, ponderous person with a flower in his buttonhole and a walking stick. His hair was certainly black for a man of his age. His hair and his moustache. The moustache seemed to tickle him. It wiggled a bit. He raised a hairy hand to smooth it—and there was something strange about that hand and that moustache! Then she had it. The hair on the hand was sandy—and very sandy at that! Aha! Tripp's manipulation of the scissors and spirit gum cleared away the mists. That was a false moustache! The man was a detective!

"Hey Benny—" she said suddenly. "I forgot something, will you run me back to the ninth for a second?"

"Sure, Miss Maisie—" said Benny, stopping and reversing his power. The other passengers scowled, but Maisie flashed them blinding smiles, and it seemed quite all right. Even the person with the moustache seemed not to mind.

"Just a minute—" she ran out of the car and

grabbed Tripp, who had not left yet. "There's a real detective in the elevator," she hissed as she dragged him out to the car. "Whyn't you follow him around and see how he works? Get valyble experience."

"Yes'm," said Tripp.

Back in the elevator Maisie used her eyes to the best advantage, indicating the detective so Tripp could watch him and learn from him. And she said goodnight to the teacher and pupil and went her way.

"Did he trail a criminal?" she asked anxiously the next morning. Tripp looked only a shade sadder and more forlorn then the day before.

"I lost him right at the corner," he admitted. "He went into the drug store and I waited in front for half an hour, and then I went in and he musta gone out the other door."

"Orp!" Maisie gulped. "Say, you wanta use your head. Why, even I'd know enough to run around to the back when a detective went into the front. They're always throwin' pursuers off that way. Dicks ain't foolish enough to let anybody follow them."

"Sounds more like a crook then a detective, runnin' out the side door," remarked Tripp.

"Where'd you get that stuff?" retorted Maisie. "They dodge in and change their disguises. You said yourself they had to have 'em. Bet he just pulled off his moustache and walked right by you."

It began to look as if she would have to learn

something about detecting if Benny was to get any real benefit from his lessons. She was faintly afraid that Tripp wouldn't catch many criminals at that rate. She might learn what she could from that fellow on the fifth floor.

"Has that bird on the fifth come in yet," she asked Benny. "The one with the black moustache."

"I don't know any bird with a black moustache," said Benny.

"He wears a brown fedora," said Maisie.

"I never seen no fedora," said Benny, who had been bringing the man up to the fifth for weeks, and taking him back down for the same length of time. Even as he argued the elevator bell rang, and to save time Maisie got in the cage. The sole passenger waiting was a portly, well groomed man with black hair but no moustache. He wore a cap, well down over his eyes, like a golfer. But he had sandy, bristly hirsute adornment on the backs of his hands and he got off at the fifth!

So did Maisie.

Her quarry went down the hall and turned to the left, then he unlocked a door and went in. Maisie tiptoed to the door. There was no name on it. This was a real detective, all right. He didn't want the world to know that he was in business, even. As she stood there she heard the clicking of an automatic telephone being dialed, and then there came a voice saying: "That you? Did you pull it off? Yeah? . . . What was it worth? . . . All cash? That's the ber-

ries! . . . Good boy. . . . No, they never even noticed me standing at the counter. . . . Yeah. . . . Tell you, meet me at the St. Gildis, main dining room, get a table near the fountain, and I'll be there about twelve. Oh—Van Slyke would be a good moniker. . . . O.K. . . . see you then." And the sound of a receiver hung up.

That was real, genuine detective stuff. Nothing correspondence school about that. Tripp ought to watch—or listen—to this bird work. Using phoney names and everything, going to the best places. The St. Gildis hotel—main dining room. No use sending Tripp to watch his methods, though. If the dick walked around a table he'd lose Tripp. Her faith in Tripp was fragile, to say the kindest thing about it.

She had to keep Tripp working, though, so he wouldn't go back to that firm of lawyers and say that George was out of town. Let them worry. Put off the evil hour. She herself would lunch at the St. Gildis and learn something. Nothing you learned could ever hurt you. She might even want to be a detective herself some day. Lots of travel and adventure in it. There had been some great lady detectives in the magazines!

A small table for two, occupied by one, immediately beside the entrance of the St. Gildis dining room, afforded an ample scrutiny of all comers. It was ten minutes after twelve when the sleuth appeared. She hardly recognized him at first. With his

stylish cutaway coat with a precise flower, a smart derby, a walking stick, a touch of color in the protruding handkerchief, he looked a different person. He had no moustache to deceive, this time. But there was a Van Dyke, of a silken sand color. Maisie's eyes scarcely believed it. But the back of the hand that passed her was hirsute and sandy; and he asked the captain, in dignified voice, for a gentleman waiting for Mr. Van Slyke.

Yes, a gentleman was awaiting him, at the table near the fountain. The captain seated the newcomer and the two men fell into conversation.

Maisie could not hear the resplendent Mr. Van Slyke ask his vis-à-vis: "Did you check your parcel with your hat?"

"That bird Van Slyke is the canary's vocal lessons," she remarked to herself. "Believe me, there's plenty I can learn from him to teach to Benny."

"Did you speak, miss?" asked the captain, hovering near the door.

"I said is that the great Van Slyke himself?" she asked for want of a quicker answer. She hadn't known she was talking out loud.

"Why—yes—" he replied. "Do you know him?" *He* didn't.

"Well who doesn't?" she snapped, in scorn and the captain slunk away ashamed. It was one on him. And the first time since he had taken charge of the St. Gildis dining room that he had slipped up on a celebrity.

When "Mr. Van Slyke" went out he carried a new brief case and wore a brown derby instead of a gray one on his head. That seemed funny. Maybe she was mistaken about the color, and him not having worn that one in. And maybe she had missed the brief case. One couldn't see everything right off at first. After a little practice she would be able to detect better. She had not seen the exchange of hat checks, Maisie had not. Neither had any one else.

Retrieving his stick, Mr. Van Slyke crossed the street and entered the green park which faced the hotel, Maisie half a block in the rear. At the far corner of the square he stopped to light a cigar and chat with the traffic cop, giving the officer a smoke too. And he surveyed the path which he had just traversed. Since Maisie had reached the corner by then, she stopped too and waited for the next move. On the other side of the policeman she waited.

"Yes, officer," Van Slyke was saying. "It makes a man hate to go indoors, a day like this."

"I'd be willing to change jobs with you," said the traffic cop, mopping his brow and stowing the cigar away in his hat.

Of course he would. Maisie knew that every pavement pounder wants to be a detective. And then her quarry went on.

Maisie missed the elevator he took, but it didn't matter. She would go on up and see how the detecting school was coming on and if there were any new cases. She found the two absorbedly studying an

early afternoon paper, reading the details of a daring hold up of an outlying branch bank that morning.

"Got away with forty thousand dollars in cash," Tripp explained. "We was just studying the best way to starting to find the robbers. There's a reward of forty-five hundred dollars from the bank and the sheriff and the newspaper. That would be something worth detecting."

"Do they give a description?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"Well get on your disguise—no, wait a minute."

With visible effort, Maisie thought. Tripp would never in a weeping world know how to go about hunting a bank robber. Neither did she, for that matter, but there wasn't any law against going down and asking the detective on the fifth for a tip or two on how to start. If they found the criminals, they could pay him for his information on starting.

"You, Tripp," she said. "To heel, little man, and you, Benny, trail along down the hall and wait. I gotta see a bird on the fifth, and then we'll start you out after that reward. There's tricks in all trades, and maybe real dicks know some of a bank robber's general outlines that we don't know."

The real reason she left Benny waiting in the hall was that she did not want Benny to know how little Tripp knew about detecting. Benny might get uneasy about his investment.

"If they got something beside bare cash," she said

sagely, "you could start on the pawnshops. That's what the papers always say to do."

"They got some bonds—Amalgamated Construction—the paper said," Tripp reported.

"Well my parent had a whole suit case o' bonds o' one color or another, bought from season to season, and he couldn't hock 'em for the price of a new trapeze—" she howled.

"Hey, they ain't nobody in that sweet of offices—" called Benny, as Maisie turned into the lane of offices on the fifth. "Bardell and Company, stocks and bonds, just moved away from there last week. They went to the Essex Exchange Building."

"Have it your own way, little boy," said Maisie. "If they ain't nobody in there I promise not to talk to 'em."

And she rapped at the door.

There was no answer at first, but she thought she heard a shoe squeak.

"Hey, Mr. Van Slyke," she called. "It's just me, M. St. Clair, and I want a minute's chat on business."

The words Van Slyke must have done it. The door opened, but only a crack. The big man peeped through the crack.

"I won't bite—nor peach on you," said Maisie, smiling, and she put her foot into the crack in the door. "You c'n do me a immense favor if you're a mind to an' it won't cost you a thin dime."

With that she slipped into the widening crack,

dragging Tripp after her. The man stared as if at an apparition. "Did Risdon send you?" he asked.

"Unhunh—" Maisie grunted. "Nobody sent me. I come myself."

"How'd you know my—name?" he demanded.

"Listen, mister, I had my eyes on you for sometime," she grinned. "I says to myself the first time I spotted you, there's a bird that is all to the mustard, okay. He knows his apples, I says. I been shadowin' you just to see how clever you are an' I gotta hand it to you." She looked around the room, which was sparsely furnished, to say the least. A packing box served for a table, a smaller one for a chair. Changes of raiment hung in the shallow coat closet in the corner. Pieces of baggage stood against the walls and a brief case lay atop some papers on the larger box.

"Yes sir," she continued brightly. "I knew right away that you was a bozo that I wanted to connect with to give us a few pointers about the business. There's a bird that's cost my office plenty o' dough and I'd like to get the low-down on how to round him up. The name's Liscomb. All I need's a clew and maybe you could give it to me. And then Tripp here, Tripp and Fall—ain't that a name for a three sheet? Try and tie it—Fall's his partner, too, they want to work on this morning's bank robbery and don't know where to start. Does it come hard, this graft o' yours, or could a party learn it rapid? I need to make a lot o' dough and I ain't exactly dumb, and I thought

you might shove me the details, and I'd declare you in on the profits."

"Say, what's your game?" demanded the big party belligerently.

"Game?" repeated Maisie innocently. "I just told you. I had you figured right off the bat, them whiskers ain't no disguise for one that uses their head for its orig'nal purpose. An' I want to join on as apprentice or something so I can teach it to Tripp and Fall. They won't run in opposition to you, and will lay off whatever job you're on; an' anyway they're pretty weak sisters, but you can't arrest a guy for tryin' and this little bird *can* try."

Small wonder that the stranger misunderstood the tenor of her remarks.

"What line do you work?" he asked. This dame was a new kind. She had him hipped.

"Me? Oh, I'm headed for the bench, like a has-been ball player; only on my bench I'll say who gets the hard labor. But right now I'm in the kindie-garden and don't know which foot to step on first. You, being who you are, could give me the c'rect dope."

Benny might have been a total loss as a detective, but he knew that a tenant in that office was somehow phoney and decided to go and ask the manager of the building about it. And the manager of the building agreeing perfectly with Benny, he went down and got the policeman on the beat, who, just in case of necessity, put in a call for brother incumbents.

It was while the portly man was mulling over the contents of Maisie's oration that Tripp, wishing to rest his bones, pushed over the brief case to sit down; and it was entirely accidental that the documents under the brief case should show. And that Maisie's lightning eye should read "A-m-a-l-g-a-m-a-t-e-d-C-o-n-s-t-r-u——"

It was her turn to gasp.

"Well," she said nonchalantly, her heart jumping like a balky mule. "We'll come back after you make up your mind. Think it over." And she gave her smile its full blare of light.

"Just a minute—" said her victim, for he had caught a flicker of those amber eyes. "You come in here of your own accord, but I'll have something to say about when you go out."

He made a slow movement toward a rear pocket with one eye on Tripp, but Tripp, bored and a little sleepy, wasn't even looking. But Maisie was, and she didn't like that movement, not a bit. She began to get mad. Fear was a word not in her lexicon. And something had to be done. So she did something. There was nothing suspicious in the slow, easy way she raised her brogan; it was merely a shift of weight from one foot to the other. He whom she had thought a great detective was not expecting anything from her, so the stout heel of the serviceable brogan came down upon the forepart of the great man's foot, and he had a bunion! True, Maisie had noticed that, too. Anyone would wince at such a sudden pain. The

man did. And while he was mid-air in wincing, as it were, Maisie with a sudden thrust, poked at the crook of the arm which was drawn back and shoved hard.

The exact point of that backdrawn arm hit the concrete corner of an out-jutting structure of the wall, and with a sudden clatter a wicked automatic fell to the floor. Using her elbow to good purpose, Maisie stooped to retrieve the gun. The elbow hit its mark and the man "Whoosh!"-ed as he felt the jab in his diaphragm. Bunion, crazy bone and wind! Then she pointed his gun at him.

"Y'oughtn't play with things like this," she said cordially. "Naughty boy! Li'ble to hurt y'self. Maybe you better back inta that corner now where it can't hurt none," and she pointed it more sternly. He backed, and then Maisie heard footsteps. There was a key in the lock.

"Procession forms on the right," she howled. "Come right in and identify the body."

An open-mouthed crew gathered in the doorway, but safely outside.

"Come gather him in and hold till called for—" she grinned at them. She held her own hand high to indicate the winner of the bout. "Ain't he the pretty baby? Nothing more dangerous than a shoe to quell the riot, either. Lucky for me I made a study o' jew jetsam, or me and Tripp here mighta been inoculated. Greek strong man learned me that trick when I was measured by a yardstick. Grind 'em with your heel, sister, they used to say, an' knock the steam

outta them with a quick poke. Man ain't dangerous when his crazy bone or a corn hurts sudden, or when he can't breathe."

"What is all this?" demanded the manager of the building. "Miss St. Clair, that's Mr. Blister, one of the employes of the brokerage firm who just moved from these offices."

"I don't care who he is. That's of course how he got the key to this place," she retorted. "Blister—nice name for him. Plaster might be a better one at that. I ain't read his horoscope yet, but I thought he was a great detective."

She turned fiercely upon the policemen, standing still.

"Say, will you birds come in and put the bee on this bird, or do I have to do that for you too?"

At this gentle hint several officers surrounded the prisoner, and with precautions as to wristlets and so on, made him safe for democracy, as it were.

"What's he done?" asked one.

"Well, he wore disguises for one thing, and I wanted to learn his business and spoke respectful to him. Great Puget Sound, what a oilcan I made outta myself. Musta had a bad case o' simps in my inf'ncy an' never recovered. If it wasn't that Tripp, there, got tired and wanted to sit down, an' that I can read print if it's large enough—but maybe I done him a injustice at that—maybe he come honest by them Amalgamated Construction bonds——"

At her words everyone jumped, and a policeman

looked at the bonds which were almost under Tripp where he sat calm and unruffled. And in the brief case was the currency—all of it—neat parcels of greenbacks still taped together——

"Phew!" the policeman whistled. "Listen, sister, you got the right party all right. An' think of the reward that's out for this party! And him right here in a downtown office building all the time! A fool for luck!" he said bitterly. It was on his own beat.

"Great prancin' ferris wheels!" cried Maisie. "Reward! Ain't that a welcome word!"

"Must carry a horseshoe," cried another officer.

Down the hall toward the elevator went three officers with the prisoner, while the others stayed to congratulate Maisie.

"I still don't see how she got on to him or captured him," said one sadly.

"Send up some o' your dicks," she laughed gaily. "To take a lesson or two. An' the shoe I carry ain't never been worn by no horse! An' when there's a duty to be done I just nacherly go in and perform it. Sittin' still when a bird's reachin' for his hip is one tune this music box ain't never learned to play. Not me!"

"Well, whatever your system, it's pretty good," another put in.

"Pretty good nothing. It's perfect," she answered jeeringly. "Why, catchin' criminals is easy. You gotta dodge these days not to run into one. That's

the trouble with dicks—they try to do all the dodgin'."

"Going up?" asked Benny, with respect, back in his car.

"I'll say we are, forty-five hundred bones between the three of us, you an' Tripp an' me. My share will get George outta hock."

"Oh say, Miss Maisie," said Tripp, mildly, almost bashfully. "I meant to tell you this morning—that suit was dismissed and I ain't got to serve those papers."

"How'd you know?" she demanded.

"My firm told me, this morning," he replied, grinning.

"I thought you couldn't go back till you'd served 'em?" she argued.

"Well," he hung his head. "A good detective has got to keep something to himself, ain't he?"

Maisie laughed outright. "Ain't that a pip?" she cried gleefully. "An' I thought I was gettin' away with it, abstractin' your mind from that suit, an' here you was sittin' on this job detectin' me and George!"

"I hope you ain't mad, Miss Maisie," said Tripp. "But it's all right now. The fellow that skipped came back, and he was only gone out of town to raise the money. So they dismissed the case."

"An' you still got your job," she laughed. "Everything come out right. And I got fifteen hundred velvet," she laughed louder.

"I quit," said Tripp. "I'm goin' to open an office and do detectin'."

"Well that's nothin' that nobody can laugh off," she howled at that. "Somebody always gets the soup spilled on them, and this time—it looks like it was me! And this time it raised a blister—oh well, what's a Blister or two between friends."

"It's enrichin'—" murmured Tripp. "An' I'm goin' to start huntin' Blisters."

"Attaboy—" shouted Maisie.

XIII

SAY IT WITH GESTURES

THERE was no reason for George to act like the doctor had just told him he couldn't live a year. It wasn't her fault that he had been late, this morning of all mornings. Alarm clocks were still sold, so she reflected as he said a few terse things upon his arrival at the office.

"Well my grief," she cried, George having stopped for breath. "Is it any reason for you to haul off and hand me a dirty look because I was doing you a favor? You'd think I was cramping your style, instead of doing you a priceless benefit. How'm I to know that you're in the middle o' a con'frence at Nash and Fry's—Nash and Fry—sounds like the kindsa potatoes on a bill o' fare——"

"But, Miss Snclair," George reiterated for the third time. "Why is it that what you regard as priceless benefits must always be performed at the expense of something which I consider really important? No doubt it never occurs to you that I am practicing law here, but you perhaps think of me as doing the detail work on such cases as you consider worthy of our effort. Must I tell you again that the Mayberry case is one upon which I have expended much

thought and time, and now just as I had things where I wanted them, when I arranged a meeting between the other side of the case and myself, one which will probably never be possible again, and just when we have brought the matter to a point of discussion——"

"Yeah, you've said all that before, twice," Maisie retorted with spirit. "An' I've added to that how was I to know it? O' course, if I'm just a figure around here and ain't allowed to know nothing going on, that's different again. But I didn't know it; all I knew was that some female voice says Mr. Dorsey is at Nash and Fry's office if we want him, and hangs up before I could tell her we did want him; and where you were being what I was at the boilin' point to discover, you not being here, and havin' left your residence some time in the grim dawn as far as I c'd learn, and this client out there stewin' and frettin' and wavin' this paper, and Nash and Fry being right across the street, and——"

George came back to the matter in hand. There *was* a client waiting. One for whom Maisie Snclair had burst into Nash and Fry's offices, interrupting and disrupting a conference which might have led to the compromise of the Mayberry case. Undoubtedly this thing would spoil all his hard work. That case would go to trial now, and he might lose it. He had lost an opportunity to display his marvelous finèsse, to bring the Mayberry case to adjudication without a lawsuit. He sighed.

"An' you ain't never told me not to come and get you when you're anywhere—" Maisie was still talking.

"Good heavens, Miss Sinclair. Do I face the possibility of your eventually doing everything against which I have not issued a warning?" George groaned. It seemed quite probable, too.

Maisie's startled look faded as there came a sharp rap at the door. "Well, show her in," George sighed.

Maisie did, with an air of triumph, and shut the door quickly. It was only a moment before George popped out of the room in such a state! "Do you know what this woman wants?" he demanded.

"Well, not exactly," she parried. "But I got five outta five thousand words an' her gestures is elegant. She waves a paper and points a finger as well as anybody, an' she says plenty if a person was to measure!"

"But—" George stammered. "What about? What did you come and get me for?"

"My stars, I ain't no mind reader," she grinned. "All I know is, the woman points at your door constant from the time she comes in, an' she acts like she was in a hurry, and she sounded loud an' the paper looks important."

"Well I'll be—" George started aloud but finished under his breath. "Does anyone around here understand Spanish?"

"Oh, you got that far?" she nodded. "I'd a said it was Mexican."

George went back to wait while Maisie inquired for a Spanish-speaking person, but it seemed no one in the building knew the language. Then—trust Maisie for that—she had a bright idea and a moment later had on the wire no less a personage than the clerk in Department Sixteen at the Courthouse.

"Mr. Redfield," she shrilled into the instrument. "This is M. St. Clair talkin' an' I'm in a most emphatic tight place—no, not jail, strange as it may seem. But we gotta lawsuit down here that maybe is worth millions only we don't know what it is, or anything about it. The client's full o' words but they don't sound like they're spelled, 'cause we don't understand Spanish and could you send us the bird that does the go-between stuff for the courthouse, you know, the one that listens to the lingo for twenty minutes and tells the judge 'he says no.' That's the baby we want and we want him quick. If this lady has to wait much longer she'll bust—or outlaw—" she howled at her own joke then.

Then she howled cheerfully at George: "It won't be long now! We will have the dirt hauled pretty soon. Mr. Redfield is goin' to send us the *inter*pitty —one o' those birds that listens with one ear and talks English with the other."

Nor was it long before the interpreter who was employed at court trials made his appearance. Mr. Talamentes by name he was, and he arrived breathless. Court interpreters do not lead an affluent life. This one was no exception.

"Was you busy?" Maisie asked, pleasantly.

"No miss, I haven't had a trial for some time," he informed her.

"Ain't that too bad. There perhaps ought to be more Spanish people tried, I expect. We gotta lady here who wants what she wants powerful bad, and you are the bird who can spill it to us; draw us a blueprint of it," she complimented graciously.

She swung the door open upon the excited client wringing her hands in anxiety. At one word from the newcomer, she quieted down and after an exchange of melodious sounds the interpreter said pompously:

"This lady is Señora Calderon, and she wishes your services in connection with a document. It is a transfer of property and she wishes you to acknowledge her signature upon the same."

George's mouth, already open, stayed that way. Maisie's didn't. She shut hers suddenly, and gulped. She prayed for a hole in the floor but none came. The concrete remained intact.

"Isn't she looking for Attorney Dorsey?" she gasped, after a pause. "Hasn't she got a lawsuit, and isn't this a paper in it? What was she pointing at his door all the time for?"

"While the Señora does not speak English, she recognizes a notary's sign wherever she sees it," said the Talamentes person. "She has had to have the services of a notary many times. This door has a

Notary Public sign on it. She witnesses many documents. She wishes this one signed."

"Is that all?" George was very quiet.

Maisie didn't care for that quiet tone. She wished the next day were Sunday. George often forgot, over week-ends, mistakes made on Saturday.

"That is all."

In silence George affixed his signature and the seal to the document and handed it to the lady, who smiled, talking volubly, and laid a coin, fifty cents, on the desk.

"I regret," said the interpreter, leaving, "that for so small a thing I have to make a charge——"

"Perfectly all right," said George. "What is it?"

"It would be a—dollar."

George paid it.

The interpreter followed Señorita Calderon out of the office. George followed the two of them, with words at his tongue's tip, to use on Maisie. She was gone.

Back in his office he sat with head on bended arms. This was the most preposterous thing Miss Snclair had done for some time. It was not that the client had turned out not to be a client—George had almost felt sorry for Maisie then—but to think that for this he had been interrupted in the Mayberry discussion. He had no more than begun to argue his position to them! He had just uttered the most important words he had to say; the cold, dead words, which, when

amplified, explained and emphasized, might have been the deciding factor in persuading the defendant to compromise, thereby saving George's client the expense and trouble of a lawsuit.

He had said the words, yes, had just loosed his flow of reasoning whereby they were to be convinced —and then had come this Maisie Snclair with her interruption. When he had remonstrated with her, the defendant had risen and said: "Go ahead, Mr. Dorsey. We'll think it over and let you know. I'm in a hurry anyway."

There was nothing left but to follow the exuberant Maisie. Nash and Fry would talk their client into defending the suit. And his natural aversion to trials made him think they would win it. And whose fault was that? Who's but Maisie Snclair's. And she had said: "You never told me not to come and get you—" was there no end to his troubles? The end of her employment would be the one thing which would stop all this. Surely there could be no boomerang connected with this case to put him in her debt. No, Maisie Snclair had pulled the fatal boner. Convinced of that, comforted thereby, George went to lunch.

And the moment he had departed, Maisie came out of the coat closet where she had gone to fend off conversation until she could think of something to say. George was boiling, and now was not a good time to go into the matter. And then—the outer door burst open and there entered, with gusto, the Señora Calderon.

"My ancient aunt!" cried Maisie, as the Señora rushed toward George's private office, waving a paper and gesticulating. "Have I gone plumb bugs or is this happening to me? I coulda swore this was all gone through with once before, but maybe it's one o' them dreams the cycle-analyzers is always talking about——"

"Señor—señor—Door—saaaaaay—" howled the Señora, having acquired a slightly impaired pronunciation of George's name from Talamentes.

"The señor is vamoose," said Maisie sternly. "An' a darn fine piece o' work it is, too. If he was to come in now an' see what I see he'd have kittens. A four-bit job that costs the office a dollar ain't his idea of profit—nor mine. What is it, sister? Can the traffic cop gestures an' loosen up."

She took the document from the trembling hand and looked at the spot where the pointing was directed. There was a blank space. George had filled in all the blanks where a notary should of necessity write, but there was one more. The lady carried a slip of paper too, but Maisie could not read it. It was Spanish. So she handed it back, smiling. Then she studied the paper with an air of wisdom, and then took a long chance. This woman had to be shooed out. It was, perhaps, a witness which was wanted. Oh well, Spanish papers might not amount to much anyway. Nothing heathen did. With a reckless hand she took a pen and wrote in a neat script "M. St. Clair," made an eloquent and meant-to-be reassuring

gesture and passed the document over. The Señora looked, bowed, smiled, and departed, which had been Maisie's chief idea right along.

"That was a close one," sighed Maisie, mopping an alabaster brow in mock terror. "And now to make a getaway without a clew, and to pray *ang root* that clients will block the traffic this afternoon until George has time to cool down."

Her special providence, which no doubt worked overtime always, must have been on the job after lunch. One believes that it must have required one whole and separate department of guardian angels, well trained and up in the fire drill, to take care of the sprightly and enterprising Maisie. At any rate, they kept the chairs in the reception lobby well filled until about three o'clock in the afternoon, the occupants waiting for admission to George's private sanctum. Ushering in several, Maisie had caught the quick serve of a dirty look, but with a backhand stroke worthy of mention had returned the same, played a marvelous defense, and if the metaphor may be continued, had even handed out a rather nasty service of her own.

But now it was five minutes after three. The last of the stream of clients was about to depart and Maisie felt that she needed a cohort of shock troops to cover her retreat; for retreat seemed desirable. *But* unwise. George was going to have his say, and when he did, it would carry weight. Not that you

could blame him; but she felt that one could not blame her, either.

The belated client left.

"Miss Sinclair—" came George's worst and coldest voice.

"Pour out the starch, old timer, you're going to need it," Maisie said to herself sotto voce. "You're gonna get run through the wringer!"

"Be there in a jiff—" she called back nonchalantly. Unless something happened now, the current was to be turned on. The straps were all adjusted and the words of farewell had been said. High voltage does it!

The conference of guardian angels, however, just reached its climax when the call came. In a body they rushed to formation and were wafted down to the job. The outer door opened. A gentleman, hat in hand, entered. Excited he was, too.

"Mr. Dorsey?" he demanded. "Is he at liberty?" He was. Too much so, Maisie thought.

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Nash," George greeted him, as Maisie, with a twinkle in her eye, opened the door for the caller. How disappointed George must be. Just when he had his oration ready to turn on there was a leak in the pipes! At that moment the hatred George had been feeling for her all day crystalized into one flawless diamond. This was the Mr. Nash with whom his negotiations had been so rudely and fatally interrupted this morning! Mr. Nash had

come to say that Mayberry was determined to go to trial!

And then the cohort arrived, full strength.

Again the outer door, and in rushed Señora Calderon! Waving a document, expatiating, gesticulating, howling like a dervish, shouting "Door—saaaaay——"

"Holy pineapple!" murmured Maisie—and her murmur was as the roaring of some rivers. "Somebody's told this dame she stopped the show; she thinks the clapping is for her instead of the act following, and she's come back for another curtain call! Nothin' short o' the hook's gonna drag her out. Now the soup is spilled for sure. He mighta got over once, but twice calls for lilies on the folded hands! With Nash in there—and my luck tells me it ain't another Nash, but the same old model—she pulls this rush act a second time on George, makin' three in all for me."

A suspicion arose. "Could I a' wrote my name as witness where something else was wanted?"

She tried to head the Señora off, but there was no possibility of that. Apoplexy was imminent. And she rushed through the doorway. "Talamentes—" she was shouting. Aha! It was one on Talamentes. Maybe it was a case after all. Maisie called Talamentes on the telephone, and then extracted from her own purse a ready dollar. "The least I can do is pay for it," she sighed.

The Señora refused to allow George to put her

out. She was howling loudly, and Nash was sitting quietly waiting the dying out of the blaze, waiting for the fuse to burn out and the place to be thrown into darkness. Then again the door burst in with a louder noise than ever.

"Where is this crook Dorsey?" yelled an excited man of foreign appearance. "And this M. St. Clair who bought that property from Señora Calderon?" He pointed an accusing finger at the Señora who quailed and cowered and ran to George for protection, making pitiable sounds.

"Who wants to know?" demanded Maisie. "An' whoever said M. St. Clair bought anything from anybody?"

"Door—saaaay—" yelled the Señora, wrapping anguished arms about George's neck.

"Ten years in the hoosegow—" said Maisie in a matter of fact tone. "For me. An' no parole."

"For who?" demanded the latest arrival. "The deed was made honestly and the Señora had agreed to accept that price for the land, and it was honest money we were to pay her. And she comes to have the deed acknowledged and returns with the deed made out to Mr. St. Clair. He has defrauded us, this St. Clair, of many thousands—that oil——"

"Huh?" Maisie pounced upon that word. She began to sense something. "You do seem oily, that's a fact. Who did you buy oil from?"

"The land," he said with dignity, ignoring Maisie, "was worthless to the Señora. She paid taxes until

she became impoverished. We were paying all her back taxes to keep her from losing it, and a little money to her besides."

"Was there oil on her land?" Maisie persisted.

"Miss Snclair—" thundered George. "Can you not take these people outside? I'm busy—with Mr. Nash—this lady——"

"I ain't got no control over her," said Maisie scornfully. "Not the smallest part. An' this is only twice for you an' I've had it in three doses. And when this is over, you can find another watchdog, I'm getting through."

Mr. Talamentes, intruding at that instant, heard the torrent of words the lady was pouring forth and listened. "This lady is saying—" he turned to George as if George had asked him a question, "that this man has defrauded her, or tried to. That he frightened her into promising to sell some land to him by saying she was losing it, and that she has been saved by the name of St. Clair being on the deed in a blank space where the buyer intended to insert his own name."

"Oho!" said George, freezing up, on the surface, but inside simmering with glee. This time M. St. Clair was caught in a net of her own making and he did not see how she could wiggle through the meshes. "However the name of M. St. Clair got on that deed I do not know. I most surely did not put it there."

"I did," said Maisie in a small voice. "To keep

her from losing her"—"mind" was what Maisie was going to say, but George cut in.

"We will rectify that mistake—" he said in deadly calm.

"The Señora does not want it changed—" said Talamentes, the señora still vocalizing. "She wishes to thank you for its being there. They had struck oil on the adjoining land, and the Señora did not know it until she returned with the deed, made out wrong. It was only then that they made the slip which told the Señora that her land was valuable. Then this man told her he would sue her for failure to carry out her contract and force her to make another deed, and she comes to you for protection. She does not wish to make another deed."

George looked from Talamentes to the Señora; from her to Maisie; from Maisie to the irate stranger who wished to purchase the land—and then started the circle all over again. And then he looked again at Maisie, standing in the doorway.

St. George going forth to slay the dragon had nothing on Maisie for beatified countenances. "Hm!" she said, "Hm!" and that was all. It was enough. He saw her gleaming orbs fixed on him. He looked away, a dull flush beginning to make its way from under his collar at the rear and toward the front of his physiognomy. And he recalled the sound of certain words she had spoken a moment before. She had said "I did it to keep her from losing—" Losing her land? Had she been telling the truth or was this

another of those unbelievable coincidences which brought her up from submergence in a sulphur pool fragrant as an Easter lily and looking ditto? George burned with anguish as he realized that Nash, the attorney in the Mayberry case, was sitting quietly in his corner taking it all in, an interested witness.

"If you will withdraw to the reception room with your party, Mr. Talamentes," George attempted a somewhat scarred dignity, but it was the best he had. "When I have finished a matter with this other gentleman we will go into the matter of this deed."

"Never mind, Dorsey," said Mr. Nash, tactfully rising. "I only dropped in for a moment. I just wanted to tell you that the Mayberry case is ready for settlement. Mayberry will not press the suit in the courts."

George was dumb—both as to voice and any other way in which the word might have been applied.

Maisie stepped into the breach. "Ain't that grand?" she burbled. "It's no more than I expected, though. When Mr. Dorsey takes a line o' arguin' he's most generally right."

"I don't mind telling, you, Dorsey," Nash went on quietly, beaming at the amber-eyed girl, "that Mayberry is a most peculiar man. I don't know whether it was by accident or design that you had your secretary interrupt you this morning right after you had spoken the words which were the pivot upon which the Mayberry case hung. But regardless of what it was, it did the trick. If you had talked ten

words more, I venture he would have turned stubborn and defended, right or wrong. But the fact that you said that much and no more, one sentence, take it or leave it, got him. It was masterly. I congratulate you. Well, see you later——"

"Yes, yes, indeed," said George. "Thanks, Nash." The way George said it, it was *gnash.*

Nash had seen and heard the Calderon case; and now Maisie St. Clair had seen and heard the Mayberry decision. There was no justice in the world.

Maisie returned from ushering Mr. Nash out, and said quietly, "You tell her she owes me a dollar for that land, to pay Talamentes. And she comes to the right place for p'tection. I guess with this kinda case Talamentes will have to go on record as drawin' a salary, or else give us cut rates. If he was to charge by the word—it pains me to think of it!"

Mr. Talamentes told the client her land was safe, and hers. And Maisie bubbled on: "I guess the bird that was tryin' to scare her has beat it. He didn't know when he come in that M. St. Clair was someone he could not bluff."

"Would you mind—" said George weakly, "would you mind, Miss Snclair—finishing that sentence you started a while ago? Why was it that you signed your name, to keep her from losing——?"

"Oh that—" said Maisie. "I signed it to keep her from losin' her good opinion o' the service she'd get in this office. And I guess it paid. Long shots do, now and then. And we gotta good client outta it,

after all. Managin' oil propitty for her—oh well—" she started out of the room. "Wasn't that a scream, about that Mayberry?"

"Miss Snclair—" said George. He had to say something, but what?

"Sure, I getcha," said Maisie. "I know. I can see it with one eye shut. But never mind mentionin' it. Do like the Señora. Say it with gestures." And she closed the door softly.

XIV

"GOOD MORNING, JUDGE!"

IT must have been his breakfast that made George so irritable this afternoon; that soured his every contact with the reception room; that made Maisie, sitting there in all the perfection of her office raiment, a more bitter pill to take. But George had been spending an hour going over the things she had done to him, and for him, in her two years of employment. Going over the times he had wanted to throttle her, the times he had thought there was a way out, and how the gods, who watch over fools and children, had stepped in and always put a rock in his path; and when he fell over it and got up and brushed himself off, he always found that Maisie had not only kicked the rock aside but that she had smoothed and brushed the path where it had been.

Gall and wormwood, this whole affair concerning her; gall from Maisie, wormwood for George. It wasn't any one thing but a cumulation of past tribulations which seemed to weigh so heavily upon him today. And there seemed to be no avenue of release; unless—if he could not fire Maisie, perhaps Maisie might be persuaded to fire him! Well, that was an idea to work on. It seemed worth trying. He won-

dered how he might sell her the idea. He wasn't very busy now, and so could toy with the thought, but he had no idea of how busy he was going to be in a minute.

It was just as he received a pair of clients to talk over a most technical matter, that Mr. Syllie telephoned. George almost bit his tongue to keep from calling the client "Mr. Foolish—" Maisie's office name for him. But he really bit his tongue when Mr. Syllie's question popped through the telephone instrument at him.

"Has your appeal been filed?" he repeated into the transmitter, reproachfully. "Why, my dear sir, of course it has."

It was while George was listening to the next words "Well—I knew this was the last day of our time to file it—" that the conviction hit George in the pit of the stomach that Mr. Syllie's appeal had *not* been filed. Well did George remember dictating that appeal from the lower court's judgment, and well did he remember getting everything ready for the said filing; also he remembered filing them—in his own filing cabinet, most particularly, with a mental note to send Miss Snclair to the courthouse with the documents.

Many a morning had blushed rosy since that one, and George knew it. That was one thing he couldn't blame Maisie for. And perhaps he hated her all the more because he couldn't.

Excusing himself to his clients, busy with tally

sheets and form books, he rummaged in the cabinet. There it was: beautiful and spotless, in typed perfection, Mr. Syllie's appeal. But there was still time to file it.

George looked at his watch. Half past two of a bright and clear afternoon in the season when a young man's fancy is supposed to stray to other things than filing appeals. Time enough to send Maisie to attend to the matter.

"Miss Snclair," he said, somewhat bitterly, going to her desk, "you'll have to stop working on whatever that is, and take some matters to the courthouse."

"Ain't you the mother's day telegram of good wishes," she smiled. "It's so warm and springy I was just wishing something would happen. I certn'y ain't nothing like my male parent or I'd a-busted by now. I'm that itching——"

As George didn't seem inclined to chat, Maisie finished it for him. "Father's feet always itched—he changed circuses every other season just so he wouldn't have to travel over the same root. Honest, if I didn't have strength of mind I'd a quit, this week. I got the troupin' fever something awful."

George's heart leaped. Was there a chance that she would quit? Let her fancy roam where it might, he didn't mind. But not until after this appeal was filed.

"Oh!" she raised her perfect eyebrows when the paper came under her glance. "Foolish's wail to high heaven that he don't wanta pay that judgment he

cert'ny owes good an' proper, an' I pray on bended knee he has to when the soopreme court has felt his pulse and looked at his tongue. Beggin' your pardon, Mr. Dorsey, that bird's a crook."

"Miss Snclair—" replied George sternly. "Kindly remember that Mr. Syllie is a client, and the court decided that he did not do anything which was not honest. And refrain from commenting on our clients at all!"

Nothing taken aback, Maisie dodged an imaginery blow. "Why I never knew he was any pet of yours, or I wouldn't a stepped on him. But you said yourself——"

"That will do!" bellowed George. That always made him madder, that you could not remonstrate with her in a courteous manner; you either had to swallow your ire or yell. That was all she understood. And lately, even yells rolled off her consciousness like water off the back of the feathered amphibian. "The tone of your remarks is not only bad taste, but it is downright insulting. I will not have it!"

"All right, all right," she soothed him. "Don't explode. I'll go file it, all safe and on time. If you'da handed it back to me the day we wrote it, it couldda been filed a long time ago and we wouldn'ta had to hurry. Good thing he called up today, wasn't it?"

She did look innocent, but there was something back of those amber eyes—very red as to face and neck George marched back to his own office. "Please

attend to it at once," he said. "I'll write a check for the filing fees."

Maisie came for the check with an air of crushed humility, but once out of the building she pranced, hummed a tune, and laughed to herself. "My stars and garters," she thought, "but George is getting touchy. Sore at himself because he darn near forgot Foolish's appeal, but what do I care? Mr. Wing likes me, anyway."

Filling in the time of her walk by thinking of the clever answers she might make to George the next time, and regretting that she had not said some of them before, she reached the courthouse. There was no guile in Maisie. She meant to file that appeal and get right back to the office. But there was something organically attractive to her about a court of law. She would have preferred sitting through a good trial to any show ever under a tent, and that for a child of the tanbark is reversion complete.

But her watch said it wasn't three o'clock yet, two hours to do the filing, and what harm to look in at a courtroom or two? Also, there was always the matter of calling on the presiding judge. He had a pleasant word for her every time she came; she loved to tell him how George's practice was growing. He had not forgotten her since that first time she left a blazing trail across his horizon. She must go in to say "Hello."

Three courtrooms yielded up nothing interesting.

But the presiding judge's chambers—that was another thing again. An important discussion was taking place there, two men leaning against the desk were deep in their subject, emphasizing their words with little stabs of their pencils into the wood. The kindly old judge looked up and smiled when he saw who his latest caller was; but since he was busy, Maisie thought to retire and come back at a more auspicious moment, when he raised his voice a bit and asked: "What can I do for you, little lady? And how are you?"

"Oh you can't do nothing an' I'm fine," she called back. "D'you suppose I never prance around unless I gotta axe to grind? How's the world treatin' you?"

Advancing, she gave the countersign smartly, saluting as if on dress parade before the general. The judge suppressed a grin, but nodded kindly toward the padded seat which lined the wall on one side.

"I'll be at leisure presently," he said, and Maisie sat down.

Since there was nothing else to do, she listened to the conversation of the two attorneys who stood there. Problems of law were meat and drink to the starving where Maisie was concerned. You never could tell when a bit of stray information might come in handy. And the judge, while attending to their talk, noticed the spray of lilacs in her spring bonnet which just barely showed satiny amber locks beneath it; the lilac linen frock fresh from a shop

box; and the peach-bloom cheeks, and he thought a bit of spring had drifted in through the open window and was properly grateful. It took a little more each year to bring him to a proper appreciation of the vernal season, and he missed his youth.

"It seems there isn't a good lawyer in the city of Los Angeles who is able or willing to lay aside his practice for a few days and become a judge *pro tem*," said one of the attorneys at the desk. "Now, Mr. Monckton and I, each anxious to get to trial and a judge *pro tem* being the only possibility with this crowded calendar condition, have agreed perfectly on several attorneys, but have been unable to obtain the services of any one of them."

Maisie's ears did not need urging to prick themselves up; they were chronically open to opportunity, to anything which looked or sounded as if it might be of benefit to George. These men said they could not find a lawyer in the city who would be a judge—pro something—what ever that was. They must have overlooked George. George would be any kind of a judge, and glad to, she was sure of it. He would leap at the chance. However, if he failed to leap, she would push him. He ought to leap, no mistake about that. Just what kind of a judge that was she did not know, but she did not intend to remain in ignorance.

"Back in three shakes—" she called to the presiding judge, in the midst of their conversation, bringing glances of mild astonishment from the two

lawyers. And pell-mell she went into the very next suite, which was the office of the clerk of the justice court. "Hey, cap," she hailed the first man she saw, Clancy by name, "what's a judge pro—pro—, pro something and how do you get that way?"

"I don't—" Clancy grinned at Miss St. Clair. "It's *pro tem* you mean, I guess, and it's a judge appointed by the court to hear a case when there's no regular judge able to hear it. This way! Suppose a case is marked up for trial this morning and when the lawyers come to court to try it they find out there's a trial on in that court which was supposed to be finished and isn't. And no end of it in sight; you know a lot of them happen that way. Look at that patent trial up in Judge Vandergrift's court right now; was expected to last three days and has lasted two weeks. It's throwing a lot of cases behind right now and some of the lawyers are pretty excited about it."

"Yes," said Maisie sagely. "I expect I've just seen a couple of them. It was them I heard talking about this *pro tem* thing. What does it mean?"

"*Pro tempore*," expounded the deputy. "Latin for 'for the time being.'"

"Just like temporary insanity," she commented. "Crazy as a bat right now and do the murder, then got sense enough to hire a good lawyer right afterwards."

"Exactly," Clancy chuckled. "Well, these lawyers think they have a good reason for getting their

cases tried right now, and they get together and get the court to appoint a judge for the time being for them, and they stipulate—that means——"

"Go ahead," Maisie encouraged. "I'm dumb, but not that dumb. I know as much about stipulations as I do about what I eat three times a day."

"Well they stipulate to have the case heard before a judge *pro tem* and choose some good lawyer to act. Just so he's a good lawyer and knows something about law and isn't interested in either side of the case. They try to get big names for the judges, lawyers known for honesty, and then agree on any one of 'em and the court appoints that person. And then that lawyer, after he's appointed, is a judge with all the power of a regular judge to try that case and decide it. Is that clear?"

"As a soprano saxophone," Maisie smiled at him. "And then do they un-judge him afterwards?"

"After a manner of speaking, yes," Clancy admitted. "Except that he keeps the title, like all judges when they're through."

"You mean it's like having measles. That while you ain't got them any more, they can't take away from you that you've had them. That you are a judge from now on, like the guy said when they asked him how long he was in the pen for?"

"Precisely."

"Well, why don't lawyers want to do it? What's the catch in it?"

"Partially, I guess, that lawyers who are well

versed in the law are so busy that they can't take the time. There isn't much money in it."

"But that title's worth money—" she reflected aloud. "Most titles are—many a poor millionaire's daughter finds out how much they're worth. Well, thanks a heap. If I c'n ever tell you anything, just yell."

On her way back to the presiding judge's chambers she went over the fine points of the thing again: a lawyer admitted to practice; not interested in either side of the case; known for honesty and knowledge of the law; and one who could afford to take time away from his practice to get the title of "Judge." The whole description fitted George like a glove.

She dashed into the judge's chambers where the two lawyers stood, still pondering. Maisie shattered the silence. Somebody had to bring up the subject, and she was never one to avoid picking up a thing just because it looked clammy to the touch.

"Say," she babbled merrily. "You're overlooking a bet. George Dorsey is the main attraction for your act an' you ain't never thought of him even."

The judge looked up and gulped in amazement. So did the two lawyers before him. They weren't even sure they were being addressed until Maisie hopped up and seated herself on the desk right under their noses.

"Were you speaking to us?" faltered one. And

"To us?" faltered the other.

"Heavy applause," returned Maisie. "Was I singing to an empty gallery? For that judge thing—George Dorsey is the very bird. He fills the bill like a headliner."

The presiding judge opened his mouth, and then shut it tightly. He had seen this young person in action before. And it had occurred to him just then that it was not an impossible idea; he was vaguely familiar with the matter at issue in this case of theirs, he knew one of these lawyers had witnesses here from the East, and that it was expensive to wait a trial. He also knew that a superior court decision would probably be but a beginning of this case, as either litigant would go higher. Both were chronic "appealers." Dorsey might as well make that disputed decision as anyone else, and he might make it quite as wisely as any hardened judge. So he kept still.

"Dorsey?" repeated one of the lawyers. "Who is he?"

"Where you been lately?" Maisie retorted facetiously. "Laid away on a 'will-call' ticket or spendin' your winters on the Nile? Why, he's one of the smartest young lawyers who ever paid his rent in advance and moved in. He's snappy; he's got every brand of jenny-say-quoy; of course he's young and good look—well, he's young."

The lawyers were looking at the old judge.

"But he ain't too young to know his way around, is he, Judge?" she murmured beguilingly. And

Maisie's beguiling looks were not mere amateur efforts.

"Is he practicing?" asked one man.

"Practicing? If you mean by that is he running scales, he ain't. He's long past that and over into the hard pieces with the cross-hand effect." She seemed to have had piano lessons, at least. "He don't have to practice any more, he can play already. But if you mean has he got a law practice of his own, say did you ever see 'em lined up to pay their taxes on the last day? Well that's like George's office most any morning."

"Do you know this Dorsey, Your Honor?" the questioner asked cautiously.

"Yes, I know Mr. Dorsey," said His Honor, just as cautiously. "He seems a very capable young man. I have gathered that he is careful and conscientious in his work, and the class of his practice is good. He has proved his sagacity in the—er—selection of his retainers—" the judge's eye twinkled— "I refer to the office force, not the fees! And I've gathered that the 'force' is well named. Gentlemen—allow me to present Miss Sinclair."

"Oh—" said the second attorney. This was different! "I've heard of Miss Sinclair! I believe she tried a case in the justice court——"

"*A* case?" cried Maisie. "Say, I've tried a gunny-sack full. But I bet you mean that first one when I was scared stiff at the footlights. I've had a lot o' kiddin' about that." She had the grace, if not the

ability, to blush. But she wiggled her shoulders to jazz time.

"Everybody's heard o' me," she went on blithely. "But that ain't got nothing to do with this Judge business. Now what about George? You needn't worry about him not knowing enough law. What he ain't real sure of he's got written in a notebook, and there ain't but one page in it got writing on it. And smart! Why say, in the two years—astonishin' as that is, me being born a trouper—that I been anchored to a chair in his office, he ain't never lost a case!"

"Indeed!" said Attorney No. 1.

"And as for the money—that wouldn't worry him. He's got plenty."

"He *is* fortunate," said Attorney No. 2. "I should at least like a look at such a person. Where are his offices?"

"We got blooming near the whole ninth floor in the Mackinaw Building," replied Maisie. And that *was* something again. The Mackinaw Building being what it is, as buildings go, the first seat in the first row of the center loge!

"Would—this—Mr. Dorsey have the time to give to such work?" ventured No. 1. They really were nearly desperate on account of this case, it was upsetting their personal calendars badly.

"Well, if you nabbed him right away, yes," she answered firmly. "By tomorrow he might not. Not having any heavy trying to do this next week or so,

he was about to disembark for parts unknown. He's been wanting a rest—and it's spring, you know." She smiled enchantingly.

"Yes it *is*"—and the two lawyers and the judge smiled as one man.

Well, George had been *wanting* a rest. That was true.

"I'm fully expecting him to be a judge some of these days anyway," she put in for good measure. "And the experience might come in handy."

"It might be looked into—" said No. 2, and there was that in his voice that was in George's tone when he finished dictating and said "that will do, Miss Snclair—" so she slid off the desk and stood perched for flight.

"My grief an' your mistake—" she cried. "I gotta beat it for the office or somebody else'll be coming in to say Goodmorning Judge before I know it. We don't have no time clock, but I like to look in on the way home—see you all later. If you want George to do this protemping, gimme a ring. Canfield 0077."

A tense silence followed her departure. And winter descended upon the room. Then the voices went on: "Your Honor—this Dorsey——"

They wanted to start their trial tomorrow, didn't they? Well, prayers might do some good, she reflected as she swung along. So she repeated "Now I Lay Me" several times, rapidly, swung aboard a moving street car, deserving but not getting a rep-

rimand from the conductor who grasped her arm and pinched it before he let go. She reached the office just two minutes before five. And like some parents before Chrismas, she could not wait:

"Say, with any luck at all we're going to have a swell surprise around here for someone I c'd mention. How'd you like to be a Judge—for a minnit? Anyway you c'd call yourself Judge afterwards and that ain't to be sneezed at for a bird—excuse me, I mean a party, that ain't had any more birthday tags tore off the calendar pad than you have. How about that for a coop? Hunh? Ain't that pullin' them off? You got yourself to thank if you get it, for always winning your cases and being honest and not having any cases up for trial for a few days and if they ask you to do it, you kinda let on you was figurin' to take a rest but they'll condemn that for you, and don't I know——"

"Miss Snclair—" George gasped, sliding a word in edgewise. "Whatever are you talking about? And where have you been so long? I have been worried to death because you didn't return sooner. I wanted to be assured about the filing of the appeal——"

The appeal? What appeal?

"My grandaunt's key to the clock!"

"Miss Snclair—what's happened—to the appeal?" George was convinced that Maisie had fulfilled a life promise and gone quite mad. "Did you not file that document?"

A picture of that spotless paper, lying placidly upon the counter in the office of the justice clerk, full five floors from its destination, probably in a waste basket by now—came up before eyes which she closed against the vision.

Now George was going to blow up. And not from habit, but for a good reason. Old Foolish would have to pay that judgment. Serve him right, but they might put her in jail, on the rock pile, and divert her rock pile money into old Foolish's pocket. Oh, a lot of things were going to happen. But the first "Weighed in the Balance and Found Wanting—" the disgrace of it. It was true. Wanting. Maisie was always wanting—something. And now she was going to get something she didn't want.

"You didn't file it?" George persisted terribly.

"Whadda you want me to do, draw a diagram of me not doin' it?" she cried.

"What did you do with it?"

"I forgot it. I was having such a lovely time surprising you——"

"You couldn't do it," he interrupted unkindly. "No, it does *not* surprise me. Nothing you could do would surprise me. But I've always known that one day your luck would turn. And there is no excuse what—that judgment will have to be paid now."

"I'll pay it—I can raise the money—" she plead.

"That doesn't matter. It is the carelessness. But one might know that you would have a spectacular

finish. And this is the finish. You know further employment is out of the question."

"The relatives may now pass in to view the remains," said Maisie, calmly. "Father always used to say when you was walking a wire you shouldn't listen to the band. He wore cotton in his ears to keep from hearin' it. It got him off his step."

She turned slowly toward the lobby. Oh well, she had it coming. She ought never to have visited around until the stamp of filing was on that paper. But never had her mind been a perfect blank before, and it had been about that appeal from the moment she heard about the judge they wanted. And she had thought that the "Now I Lay Me's" might do some good! Well, it was over. She would have to make the lease of the offices over to George. From force of habit she started to straighten her desk for morning. She wondered if he wanted her to finish the week. But her experience with animal trainers told her not to go and ask.

From force of habit she reached for the telephone, then drew her hand away again. Let George answer it. She wasn't working here any more. So she remarked to Mr. Wing, who came in at that moment. And it was a moment more before he got the whole story.

"H'm, now Miss Sinclair, I wouldn't worry about it. You were wrong, but perhaps if you'll be more careful—I think you've had your lesson——"

"I'll say I have. Even if I hadn't a got canned, it taught me one thing, that I'd have to keep cases on George better so he wouldn't forget important paper——"

But she was canned, and that was that! And she bade Mr. Wing affectionate farewell. If George changed his mind, they knew where to get her. And she'd come back later for her belongings. Didn't feel like taking them tonight.

"I gotta come back to turn the lease over to George—" she said. And was gone.

Mr. Wing strolled back to take the matter up with George, to find him pleased—oh, pleased was no name for it. His chest measurement had expanded at least three inches. The world had begun to appreciate him. This was an unexpected honor, but not entirely undeserved! His services would prove it.

"Think of it, Wing," he cried happily. "Asked me to act as a Judge *Pro Tem!* Why—isn't that wonderful? I'll be—made!"

"Congratulations," said Mr. Wing. "You must have had some good friend on the case."

"No, I've never known either of the attorneys. I guess the presiding judge must have recommended me."

"Well it's mighty fine, carrying with it the title—'Judge Dorsey'—mighty fine." Mr. Wing was almost as pleased as George.

"Judge—" said George, respectfully. He liked the word on his tongue.

"By the way, Dorsey," said Mr. Wing then, "Miss Sinclair says you have discharged her——"

"And high time—" said George stiffly. "She's cost me a good client and probably a sum of money."

"You wouldn't—reconsider—remembering all the other things she has done *for* you?" Mr. Wing pleaded. "I wonder how she happened to forget this one."

"Just plain negligence. She must have been hanging around the presiding judge's office when she should have been filing that appeal, for when she came in she was trying to tell me something she had overheard about this judgeship. That must have been it. No—wouldn't think of having her back. It's a blessed relief to know she's gone."

His mind had gone back to the honor conferred upon him.

In due time he did serve the attorneys and his country, and, be it said to his credit, with dignity, intelligence and efficacy. The trial, which lasted eight days, was balm to his spirit, carrying with it newspaper items which now and then mentioned Judge George Dorsey. George felt the eyes of the world were upon him. And then, "unjudged" he returned to private life; to squaring things with Mr. Syllie, to closing up affairs with Miss Snclair when she should

come in, to getting a new secretary and to living happily ever after.

As he went to his office the first day after the trial, he was going over the story he would tell Syllie. It isn't every day a man is made a Judge, and he may be pardoned for being flurried; also, he had discharged the incompetent employee who had missed the filing. The fact that it was on the last day for filing that she missed it need not be mentioned.

George hadn't been in the office a moment when he heard Syllie's voice, and then Maisie's.

"Don't ask me, I ain't workin' here—" she said rudely. George trembled for fear she would tell why she wasn't, but she said no word more, and he opened his door. "Will you come in, Mr. F—Syllie—" he said. "I'll see you presently, Miss Sn-clair."

"Good morning, Judge," she howled in return, quite cheerfully. And then a perfect tintinabulation of the telephone began. Since Maisie's position was still open to the world, George having put off filling it until his judgeship was over, no one answered it. He answered the phone, finished talking, and then started——

"Mr. Syllie—I regret that I must—" and his door burst open. It was Mr. Wing. "Dorsey!" he cried—"I have to see you at once—please—for a few words—but now!"

"Why—if it's terribly important——"

"I think it is—" said Mr. Wing, queerly insistant.

"Will you pardon me, Mr. Syllie—a moment—" George followed Mr. Wing to his own office and went in.

"Have you broken the news about the appeal?" Mr. Wing asked.

"Was just about to do it. Why?"

"Well, I ask your pardon again for interrupting, but I saw the little girl outside, and I was afraid she would get away before I saw you—. Dorsey, I was in the presiding judge's office yesterday, we've been friends for years, he and I; and I mentioned the fact that I was pleased at the way you conducted yourself in the case and he—he told me, boy, how you came to be offered the judgeship."

"That's interesting," said George. "How did he happen to recommend me?"

"He didn't," said Mr. Wing bluntly. "George—you were well recommended for that position, all right, but—he didn't do it. It was—Miss Sinclair who recommended you."

"Miss Snclair—" a gray tinge crept over the red above his collar and toward his chin. "Miss Snclair!"

"That's right, the little girl did it. She was waiting in the judge's chambers and overheard the attorneys casting about for someone to take the appointment, and she walked in and nominated you

as her candidate and underscored all your qualifications! The judge told me she had those two attorneys hypnotized."

George sat stonily, and Mr. Wing went on.

"He told it to me as a secret, but when I came back here and saw her sitting out there waiting to close up her connections with the office—as though losing her position hadn't broken her gallant little heart—I broke my word to him, the judge, and I'm telling you, because—because I rather think you owe that girl something——"

He let the younger man have it straight from the shoulder, fearlessly on Maisie's side.

"How dared she?" gasped George, after a long silence.

"I don't believe there is any such word as fear in her," said Mr. Wing staunchly. "Not where doing you a good turn is concerned. Stop and think, man. She's done bizarre, heedless things, but every one to your advantage——"

"But in doing this one, Mr. Wing, she neglected the thing she was sent to do——"

The telephone shrilled again, and mechanically George reached for the extension. Someone asked for Miss Sinclair. Mr. Wing called out to her that she was wanted, and George rose to return to his client.

"Think it over, boy," said the old lawyer kindly. "It seems to me she has another trial coming."

Maisie was thanking someone as George walked past without looking at her: She was telling him that

—like the Lord—she loved the Irish, and promising to dance at someone's wedding.

"I bet it's that Clancy—" said Miss Kellogg, coming from another room where she had been taking a tenant's dictation. "He's 'phoned you every day for a week. You been on a vacation?"

"Not been *are*," said Maisie, grinning. "A vacation which is due to last me until I find someone who will guarantee not to bite me if I forget once to put the cat out or wind the clock. Say—" she said suddenly to Mr. Wing, in his doorway, "beat it back in there and tell George not to spill his grief to Old Man Foolish if he ain't already done so. The cyclone never really struck the house, if you know what I mean, but just played hopscotch over the roof. In other words, lightnin' didn't strike, it was only thunder. Tell him to save his moans till he's got something to moan about. And make it snappy before he pulls the opening line——"

"I don't quite understand," puzzled Mr. Wing.

"Shake a leg and tell him not to tell Foolish about the appeal."

Mr. Wing jumped and called George.

"One more minute—" he cried. "Quick——"

"Tell him Clancy—who's Irish and a gentleman—found the blame thing on his counter in the justice clerk's office and knowing I was there and seeing what it was and the check for the filing fee clipped to it, and knowin' I was all wrapped up in that presidential campaign I was pers'nally conductin', he

took a chanct and filed it. She's been safe and sound all this time since twenty minutes before five in the day it oughta been filed—and *was*."

"Heaven help us—" gasped Mr. Wing as George came out again, black anger showing.

He had only gotten as far as "I have been acting as a Judge of the Superior Court—" and he hated to stop there. There was more to it.

"You needn't tell him about the appeal—" said Mr. Wing. "Miss Sinclair has just told me it was filed properly, in plenty of time, the day it should have been."

"Filed—" George choked. "Who——"

"The special providence that watches over fools and children—" said Mr. Wing. "And along with that remark—remember the one about fools rush in——"

George turned cold. She had filed that appeal. There was nothing left for him to do now except apologize. He walked toward her and said: "This is very opportune news—but I don't understand why you let me think you hadn't filed it."

"Oh don't thank me. I didn't. Thank Clancy. He's the baby that pulled your bacon outta the fire. I only dropped it in." She was ultra careless.

"But in view of the fact that it *was* filed—," he caught Mr. Wing's eye and reddened, "And in view of the further fact that it was only this morning that I found out you were responsible for my appointment as a judge—I—I beg you to forget—

what passed the other afternoon and return to us—Miss Snclair——"

"I accept your apology—" said Maisie blithely. "But not the nomination. You ain't kiddin' yourself that you're rewardin' me, are you, by givin' me my job back? 'Cause we're just out of that. What will you order instead? Me, I'd rather be a hasher than starve, but I'd rather starve than hang around somewhere where they wish I was somewhere else. Thanks for the offer just the same."

Whether George or Mr. Wing were the more astonished at that, it would be hard to say. But having embarked, George now went bravely on.

"But I meant to insist upon your coming back before I learned that the filing——"

A hiss from Maisie stopped him, and turning he saw Syllie standing in the doorway "Mr. Dorsey," he said with aggrieved air, "you're so busy can't I come in the first of the week? I'm in a kind of hurry."

"Why yes," said George, "that will be all right. There is nothing to talk over of importance anyway."

And after he had gone—"Really, Miss Snclair—" But Maisie interrupted him.

"If I was to come back at all, it would be strickly on the understanding that there wasn't no more of this firing nonsense every other Saturday. I'd want to know that I was workin' here." She grinned forgivingly. "After all, after a coupla years a lady had ought to not be considered a transient. If I

was to stay—" she went on: "it'd hafta be like this: I want my job to be where I lay it down, and not hafta hunt for it everytime I lay it somewhere. Maisie St. Clair, P.F., Permanent Fixture—that's the way I feel."

Without a quiver George held out his hand. "Shake hands on it, Miss Snclair—" he said. "P.F. it is. And doesn't that stand for—Past Forgotten, too?"

"And it hits Mr. Wing, too. Peacemakin' Feller," she howled. "Well then, let's start in an' see if we can't get some work done today." She called after him as he turned away—"I'm all ready, pencil poised —name your poisin'—Judge."

A client entered. "Good morning, Judge," he said. And over his shoulder George threw a glance of appreciation at Maisie St. Clair—P. F. . . . Pretty Foxy.